

EXAMINING JOURNALISTS' BLOGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR JOURNALISM  
IN MAINLAND CHINA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISTS' BLOGS ON  
CHINESE NEWSPAPER WEBSITES

By

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To my dear parents

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- J-blog J-blog is an abbreviation of the journalist's blog, which is an online diary or journal maintained by a journalist to post news or commentary on issues that are being reported and to interact with their readers.
- J-blogger J-blogger is an abbreviation of journalist blogger, who is a journalist and a blogger at the same time. Briefly speaking, journalist bloggers are those journalists maintaining blogs on the Internet.

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Journalists' blogs (j-blogs) are a novel journalistic format emerging in China. This study examined the content of j-blog posts on Chinese newspaper websites to gain insight into the general development of j-blogs in Mainland China. Topic, format, hyperlinks and multimedia such as video, audio and pictures, as well as the interactivity of j-blogs on Chinese newspaper websites were analyzed. The differences in j-blogs from three different geographic regions of Mainland China and the differences in j-blogs written by different genders were investigated as well.

Content analysis was conducted to study j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China and investigate their implications for journalism in China. Frequency analysis, Chi-square analysis, one-way ANOVA analysis and Pearson's correlation analysis were used for the study.

The data showed that the most often addressed topics in Chinese j-blogs were lifestyle, politics/government/military, crime/accidents/disasters, and business/economic activity. The most frequently adopted formats in Chinese j-blogs were the straight opinion column, the rumor-mill blog, and reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals. The format of j-blog posts varied by topic. The topic and format of j-blogs differed by geographic regions and genders.

Moreover, the study showed that there was interactivity between readers and journalists in j-blogs in China through reader comments and j-bloggers' responses. Significant main effects of topic, format, region and gender were found on the number of reader comments. J-blog posts with more reader comments also had more j-bloggers' responses. Gender and format were revealed to influence the frequency of j-bloggers' responses. In addition, Chinese j-bloggers have started to use hyperlinks and pictures to convey stories. Yet video and audio remain untapped resource for j-blogs in China. Topic, format, region and gender were found to exert influences on the use of hyperlinks and multimedia features. Correlations among reader comments, j-bloggers' responses, onsite hyperlinks, videos, and pictures were found. These findings indicated that journalists' blogs, as an alternative media and a new format of journalism, have been enhancing the two-way communication flow between readers and journalists and building an evolving media environment in China, which may further affect the journalism landscape.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Journalism is gradually evolving into a new period as the Internet and related technologies develop. As has been true through human history, from the telegraph to television, the advent of new communication technology and its adoption by mass media are bringing significant challenges to prevailing journalistic practices. So it does today with the spread of the Internet, which is forcing traditional newspapers to rethink how to practice journalism.

The Internet has increased the speed and comprehensiveness of journalism, helping the public to access a wide range of news and information with great convenience and at very low cost (Reese, Rutigliano, Hyun, & Jeong, 2007). The past decade has witnessed the rise of Internet news, which might directly or indirectly cut into newspaper use (Kaye & Johnson, 2003). However, the growth of the Internet also provides unprecedented opportunities for newspapers to extend their abilities in news gathering, news delivery and bonding with communities.

Realizing the trends in the new media age, journalists and newspapers have begun to adapt themselves to the environment and get involved in the Internet world. By taking advantage of new media technologies like the World Wide Web, podcasting and blogs, they are moving away from their traditional models of news reporting and introducing more flexible news products. They have been engaged in online journalism, delivering information over the Internet, employing multimedia formats to cover news stories and offering more opportunities for interaction with readers. One increasingly popular part of online journalism today is journalists' blogs, or so-called j-blogs.

J-blogs are online diaries or journals maintained by journalists to post news or commentary on issues they are reporting on and to interact with their readers. J-blogs can be used to disseminate information and host conversations, which meet the journalists' need to

publish news and the demand of readers who are no longer satisfied with solely being informed. Through posting comments on j-blogs, readers can provide their own knowledge and perspectives on the issues reported in the j-blogs. Hence a more comprehensive version of truth is presented, which combines both journalists' definitions of facts and readers' understandings of what is going on (Matheson, 2004). Also, the employment of multimedia formats, like video, audio and hyperlinks, in j-blogs adds more interest to j-blogs, making them more attractive to readers.

Globally, j-blogs are developing rapidly over all the continents, from America to Europe, from Australia to Asia. China is involved in this new trend, too. Blogging has begun to gain popularity in China since 2002, when blogs were first introduced into China and spread very quickly (CNNIC, 2006). J-blogs represent a unique news format compared with traditional news outlets in China, and they have begun to gain popularity among readers. In fact, as the number of blogs in China has increased exponentially, the past three years have witnessed a rapid growth of j-blogs in Mainland China (CNNIC, 2006). More and more, newspapers as well as journalists have been investing their efforts in developing j-blogs.

Generally, as is true for any other Chinese news organization, newspapers in China are state-owned. During its initial period (1950s-1970s), the government subsidized all media operations, including newspapers (Akhavan-Majid, 2004). The main tasks for newspapers in China at that time were to propagate the policies of the Communist Party, to educate the masses, to organize the masses, and to mobilize the masses (Bishop, 1989). Later, during China's economic reform in the 1980s, governmental subsidies were cut and "multi-channel financing" was introduced to media. Pushed into the market, newspapers had to participate in competition for readership, advertising, sponsorship, and other forms of financing. In addition, China's

Property Rights Reform in the late 1970s separated economic rights from legal rights over state-owned property. As a result, the Chinese government prevented a complete privatization of newspapers by maintaining legal ownership, although they granted newspaper managers rights and responsibilities to generate profits by using media resources. Therefore, profit has become a necessity and the bottom line for newspapers to survive. The party lines are the prerequisite for the very existence of Chinese newspapers (Yin, 2006, p. 35).

As the Internet develops in China, there are more and more Internet users. According to China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) estimates, there were 137 million Chinese Internet users at the end of 2006, 165 million by mid-2007, and a whopping 210 million by the beginning of 2008 (Fallows, 2008). More than a third (37.8%) of users claimed setting news information as their major goal for accessing the Internet (CNNIC, 2005), which makes the Internet an important frontier in which newspapers must compete. Many newspapers began to start their own newspaper websites and create many news products online for readers, making every effort to attract online readers. J-blogs are part of that effort.

As an innovative news product, j-blogs have extended traditional notions of the mainstream newspaper to the online world and created a new sphere of journalism in China, which may exert great influence on the future of the media landscape. The topics, formats, use of hyperlinks, inclusion of multimedia and interactivity in j-blogs, as well as their journalism implications in China, are all of great concern to readers, news organizations, journalists and researchers. However, the research in this field is quite limited.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into Chinese j-blogs running on newspaper websites, analyzing their main topics, formats and other characteristics in terms of interactivity between readers and journalists, hyperlinks and multimedia usage, examining the differences in

j-blogs in association with geographic regions and genders and discovering the potential implications of j-blogs for journalism in China.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Blogs and Journalism**

#### **Blogs**

Weblogs, or blogs, began as often highly personal online periodical diaries, posted by individuals in reverse chronological order, telling stories, welcoming comment and sometimes offering hyperlinks (Deuze, 2003). While the technology behind blogs has been around since the early 1990s, blogs began to gain popularity in the late 1990s (Blood, 2005). Today, blogs have been developed into online columns including text, pictures, sound files, video clips, etc. Blogs can be constructed and updated by one or more bloggers on a regular basis and may feature storytelling, commentary, hyperlinks and conversations (Blood, 2005; Hass, 2005; Hewitt, 2005; Matheson, 2004).

According to a study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2005), more and more American adults are creating, reading or posting comments on blogs. The Pew Internet project began to ask about blog creation in the spring of 2002. In June 2002, they found that 3% of Internet users said they had created a blog. By the beginning of 2004, the figure had grown to 5% of Internet users. Their survey in late November 2004 showed that 7% of the 120 million U.S. adults who use the Internet said they had created a blog, which represents more than 8 million people. In addition, blog readership shot up 58% in 2004. Twenty-seven percent of Internet users said they read blogs. More than one in ten Internet users (12%) said they had posted comments or other materials on others' blogs, which represents more than 14 million people, a threefold increase from April 2003, when the Pew Internet project first estimated the number of those who contribute to others' blogs. Blogs have established themselves as an important part of online culture. This is true in China, too, because there are increasing numbers

of bloggers as well as blogs in China now. By the end of November 2007, the number of blogs in China has reached 72.82 million with 47 million bloggers, which was comprised of a quarter of all the Chinese Internet users (CNNIC, December 2007).

From the opinionated to the informational, blogs cover a wide range of topics and styles, consisting of “news that is happening now almost in real time – not filtered, edited, or delay delivered, as with traditional media” (Wendland, 2003, p. 94). It becomes a “personal publishing system” that allows anyone in minutes to have access to a worldwide audience (Wendland, 2003, p. 94). Anyone can publish at any time and gain readers “in relation to their talent, their relevance and, ultimately, their accuracy, regardless of their credentials” (Weintraub, 2003, p. 58). Individuals “play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, sorting, analyzing and disseminating news and information—a task once reserved almost exclusively to the news media” (Lasica, 2003, p. 71). In this sense, blogs represent a democratization of journalism.

Along with the characteristic of open participation, two-way communication is another important symbol of the democracy in blogs. Readers, a key component in the blogosphere today, are no longer satisfied with merely being informed by the traditional media. Blogs facilitate a decentralized, bottom-up approach to news reporting by helping readers discard their traditional role as passive consumers of news and become active partners in news production (Gillmor, 2004; Matheson, 2004). And with the opportunity to comment on any individual posting, which is identified by a unique URL (Schmidt, 2007), readers routinely serve as sources and co-authors of the blogs. Journalism becomes a process in which news stories are crafted through the interactions between bloggers and readers.

### **Influence of Blogs on Journalism**

Blogs, which are evolving as time and broadband capabilities advance, might inherently be a form of journalism (Robinson, 2006). They can be maintained either by ordinary people as

stand-alone blogs or by professional journalists as journalists' blogs. With the increasing status of individual bloggers, who assert that they truly represent the unfiltered voices of audiences who have been disenfranchised by mainstream media and yearn to be heard (Lowrey, 2006), the blogosphere has gained greater power and begun to exert influence on traditional mainstream media. For instance, in "Rathergate," bloggers' pursuit of CBS's use of forged documents in its reporting on President Bush's National Guard service led CBS to launch an investigation and apologize in the end (Pein, 2005). Bloggers also played a role in the resignation of Senator Trent Lott, who had made a racist comment publicly that was caught and kept alive by bloggers until professional journalists paid enough attention to it (Smolkin, 2004; Haas, 2005).

The ascendancy of blogs not only fills the holes in the traditional journalistic gatekeeping process but also engages readers in news production by giving them more opportunities to distribute information and discuss their opinion of news with journalists, hence diminishing media's reign of sovereignty (Lowrey, 2006). To some extent, the superiority of media are ended due to the fact that newsgathering expert systems become available to the general public (Singer, 2003). Blogs, with a diversity of topics and styles, have become an important information source for people. Professional journalists are now faced with a competing form of discourse, the "diffuse, erratic, heterogeneous" articulation, which is so different from journalism's normative foundations (Carlson, 2007, p. 275). The authority and objectivity of traditional media such as newspapers are being challenged again and again. As shown in both Rathergate and the Trent Lott example, bloggers are reinforcing professional responsibility on journalists to be accurate and objective through close fact-checking.

Some non-journalists' blogs that concentrate on offering news and current affairs have established their credibility and gained popularity among readers. The line between public

journalism and personal information releases is blurred by these news-related or public-affairs-related blogs maintained by nonprofessional journalists (Matheson, 2004). As these independent news blogs develop, blogs, which are not necessarily written by journalists, have begun to be identified and accepted as an innovative news format, representing reconstituted journalism with alternative and legitimate news reporting, and becoming “part of the fabric sewn by the press” (Robinson, 2006, p. 65).

To compete with these independent news blogs, which are attempting to bypass traditional news (Wall, 2004), mainstream media have begun integrating blogs into their websites, with those blogs as a recognized source of news, commentary, entertainment, and advertising today (Kuhn, 2007). Now, blogging is becoming an established trend in traditional media. An increasing number of mainstream publications, such as some newspapers owned by recognized journalism giant *The New York Times Company*, have started their own j-blogs in an attempt to retain or recapture journalism’s authority. Also, there are more and more “professional journalists’ weblogs” published by news sites and listed on [CyberJournalist.net](http://CyberJournalist.net), a journalist blogging website (Robinson, 2006, p. 69).

### **Journalists’ Blogs**

Journalists’ blogs are easy-to-create web pages that journalists can use to post news or commentary on issues they are reporting on, with links to longer stories and background information elsewhere on the Web (Grabowicz, 2003). Many journalists have publicly endorsed the need to add blogging to journalism (Lowrey, 2006). From a business perspective, the blog is an ideal alternative medium for newspapers because it saves operating costs, allows for real-time updating and enables interaction with readers, perfectly meeting the goals of the newspaper industry (Lasica, 2003). Many news organizations have grown increasingly interested in blogs and have started to use space on their websites to launch j-blogs. They tend to translate the

traditional methods of journalism to the web, repurposing not only their content, but also their journalistic culture and relationships with publics by offering j-blogs at their websites (Deuze, 2003). For example, some newspapers decide what kinds of j-blog styles their journalists should maintain on the newspaper websites, which topics should be emphasized, and whether to allow or moderate comments from readers in j-blogs.

Newspapers have taken different approaches to their j-blogs. Some newspapers intend to have their journalists make the j-blogs a portal of news and establish the status of j-blogs as part of professional news media; some put more emphasis on conversation and interactivity with their communities, hence further developing the bonds with the community through j-blogs. Other newspapers prefer a creative way to launch j-blogs and ask their journalists to maintain j-blogs based on their own interests, making the j-blogs of diverse styles as the showcases for different journalists' interesting personalities.

For the journalists who have started their j-blogs, challenges are unavoidable, although Gillmor (2003), based on his own experiences, has stated that almost any reporter could successfully produce a blog. Unlike traditional newspaper stories, in which journalists stand behind their news stories and emphasize their commitment to fairness and objectivity, a j-blog is a place in which personality holds great importance. J-blogs are popular because "they allow the reader to see the journalist as a human being, connecting with them without the stiff, imperial voice that turns so many young people off" (Pohlig, 2003, p. 25). Journalists are not limited to objective news reporting, but "let loose in some creative writing. And having a point in the j-blog seems optional" (Robinson, 2006, p. 79).

Journalists' practices in j-blogs differ from one to another. There is a wide range of topics available for j-blogs. Some j-bloggers consider blogging on the newspaper's website as part of

their work, staying in their own specified beat areas as journalists and publishing news stories. Some describe how they gather news stories from sources and their work experiences and invite fact-checking. Some journalists prefer to comment on issues and spark discussions in their j-blogs. Some post the complete texts of interviews and solicit feedback to develop follow-up stories. Some j-bloggers focus on two-way communications with readers on whatever topic they are interested in. Others may “take notebooks everywhere, chasing down even the smallest leads and sharing everything instantly with readers” in their blogs (Heyboer, 2004, p. 10).

Due to the journalists’ different approaches, j-blogs assume various formats. Robinson (2006) identified seven different formats of j-blogs: “a reporter’s notebook of news tidbits and incidentals; a straight column of opinion for the Web; a question-and-answer format by editors; a readership forum; a confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat; a round-up of news summaries that promote the print publication; and a rumor-mill blog that the reporter uses as an off-the-record account” (p.70).

What’s more, j-bloggers have been trying to adjust their writing styles for readers online. Studies have shown that j-bloggers attempt to target readers and develop new writing styles that are different from traditional news writing in newspapers. Robinson (2006) claimed that even mainstream newspaper j-blogs tend to be nonlinear and interactive, with multiple entry points and several endings. “Reporters use traditional no-nos: Superlatives, first person, contractions, questions with no answers, answers with no questions. Stories and columns that appear in the print publication are rewritten for the Web version, incorporating long reader comments and a more conversational approach ... A story can be never ending online, thanks to hypertext links that instantaneously bring the reader from one author to another, from one angle of a subject to another” (Robinson, 2006, p.78). J-blogs have adopted a new form of journalism to meet the

needs of their audience, through which professional models of traditional news writing are being changed gradually.

As with any other kind of blog, j-blogs also thrive on open participation and interactivity with readers (Pohlig, 2003). Some research already has pointed out that commentary from readers can reconstruct the professional process of journalism, strengthen journalists' accountability in news gathering and ensure accuracy of information in j-blogs (Robinson, 2006). Journalists always face the limits of time, budget or resources in finishing a news story, which introduces questions from readers about the accuracy and credibility of information. Comments on j-blogs not only react "to what has been written in the blog, but also repair what has been published" (Robinson, 2006, p. 75), which probably corrects some mistakes in reporting and provides more information as well as diverse perspectives. Allowing comments on j-blogs opens up an important public dialogue, which helps readers to better understand the issues covered and to confirm journalists' statements, or sometimes to offer more resources or perspectives for journalists to examine and later perfect the stories.

Moreover, the capability of j-blogs to use hyperlinks and multimedia technology further enhances their interactivity. J-bloggers and readers can add pictures, audio files, video clips and hyperlinks in their posts, which make j-blogs more interesting and the communication more effective. Hyperlinks are references or navigation elements linking to some other internal content within the same domain, or some external content that is located elsewhere on the Internet (Deuze, 2003). It is one of the simplest methods of online interactivity that helps users to surf the Internet by clicking on words or images (Peng et al., 1999). Hyperlinks, which allow bloggers and readers to extend the stories indefinitely, are of unusual significance to j-blogs, because they establish a nonlinear story format and bring in other authors (Landow, 1997). Also, hyperlinks

are able to link conversations and provide background material on the topic discussed in the blog (Blood, 2002). Wall (2005) claimed that bloggers rely on hyperlinks to enhance their own posts. For example, to support their views on some specific news issues, the bloggers may add hyperlinks to the news stories or similar opinion online, “briefly summarize the link’s content, and provide commentary, criticisms, or other personal thoughts about the information to which it is linked” (Wall, 2005, p. 156). In addition, hyperlinks in j-blogs can also be considered as behavioral indicators of an issue’s perceived importance (Delwiche, 2005) because those blog posts and information sources for important issues are always the ones most frequently linked.

In general, interactivity, defined as two-way communication in which the roles of the message sender and receiver are equal and interchangeable and the speed of communicating should be close to real-time (Kiouisis, 2002). Interactivity, no matter whether it is enabled by comment, hyperlink or multimedia technology, makes it a good chance for people to contribute to a j-blog and transcend passive exposure (Peng, Tham, & Xiaoming, 1999; Stromer-Galley, 2004). Marked by the degree to which users control content, interactivity is said to be more conversational and promote immediacy, personal presence, and multi-vocality (Endres, Warnick, 2004).

### **Blogs and Journalists’ Blogs in China**

Globalization and instant communication make the world a small village, as Marshall McLuhan foresaw in 1962 (McLuhan, 1962). Blogging is quite popular in China, as in many other countries. There are probably several reasons. One is the explosive growth of the Internet and the number of Internet users in China. The second reason is that the blog provides an alternative media platform that allows more freedom of expression, while traditional media in China have been controlled to some extent. The third is that blogs are easy to maintain by ordinary citizens without the need for technical expertise or their own server spaces.

In January 2007, the China Internet Network Information Center found that China had a total of 137 million Internet users, which had increased by 26 million or 23.4% from 2006 (CNNIC, January 2007). Later, by June 2007, they found that the number of Internet users in China had reached 162 million, or 12.2% of the population of China. And due to technology development and economic growth, the annual growth rate of Internet users in China was 31.7% for 2007, entering a new round of rapid growth (CNNIC, July 2007). However, due to the large population of China, the overall Internet penetration in China was still only 12.3% (CNNIC, July 2007). Some researchers have said that an important reason for the fast growth of Internet adoption is that the Chinese government “desires an open, modern and efficient economy, including a state-of-the-art telecommunications and information infrastructure, which can capitalize on the potential of a booming information sector and contribute to China’s developing knowledge economy” ( Lu & Weber, 2006, p. 3). The government has been encouraging the development of the Internet and promoting the uses of the Internet, especially broadband, in the society, helping all houses and offices to be connected (Wu, 2005).

One result of Internet development in China is the popularity of blogs among Chinese Internet users, especially young people. The number of blogs, which were first introduced into China in 2002, has been increasing exponentially through the past six years, especially in 2005. By 2006, the number of blogs in China was 30 times more than that in 2002, when there were few blogs (CNNIC, 2006). According to CNNIC, there were an estimated 17.5 million bloggers in Mainland China by August 2006. Among all the bloggers, 44% said they “frequently updated” their blogs (p. 11), which means they update their most-often-updated blogs at least once per month. And about 75 million Chinese people, nearly half of the country’s Internet users, said they read blogs regularly (CNNIC, 2006). By the end of November 2007, the number of blogs

had reached 72.82 million with 47 million bloggers, which accounted for a quarter of all the Internet users in China (CNNIC, December 2007). This also means that one of every 30 Chinese write blogs. The blog market has been growing rapidly. Within one year from 2006 to 2007, the number of bloggers increased by nearly 30 million (CNNIC, December 2007).

As an element of virtual community and online networking, blogs have become a channel through which people can talk about themselves and communicate with others in China. There are some very famous Web portals hosting blogs: for example, Blogcn ([www.blogcn.com](http://www.blogcn.com)), BlogChina ([www.bokee.com](http://www.bokee.com)), Hexun ([blog.hexun.com](http://blog.hexun.com)), MSNSpace ([home.services.spaces.live.com](http://home.services.spaces.live.com)) and Sina ([blog.sina.com.cn](http://blog.sina.com.cn)), whose celebrity blogs earn millions of clicks every day. Because China has more than 77 million broadband users, bloggers are not only blogging, or posting comments to blogs, but also uploading video and audio content (Madden, 2006), which makes blogs more attractive.

In addition, blogs in China were developed as news and information outlets, together with commercial news websites, like Sohu ([www.sohu.com](http://www.sohu.com)) and Sina ([www.sina.com](http://www.sina.com)), to contribute to the rise of online news services. Bloggers hence have become online journalists (Chan, Lee, & Pan, 2006). And the authority of traditional journalism has been challenged by the alternative practices of news production and dissemination on the Internet. Li, Qin and Kluver (2003) found that online public opinion had begun to outpace and outsmart the traditional propaganda machine's maneuvers in China. Although the traditional mainstream media always sought to guide public opinion, the "Chinese authorities are losing the battle to control information and limit individual expression via the Internet" (Li, Qin & Kluver, p. 156). The authority of those traditional mainstream news organizations in China has begun to be diminished partly due to the

quick release of accurate information and facts online, which attracts readers greatly. People also have started to get bored with traditional news reporting and turned to the Internet as a result.

In response, traditional journalists are expected to reconfirm the authority of existing news institutions and the legitimacy of traditional models of journalism (Chan, Lee, & Pan, 2006). And the Chinese government has been trying to set up an “online media order” through regulations that privilege official media and have the effect of co-opting the new media into the marketized authoritarian media system (Chan & Qiu, 2002). Consequently, newspapers, as part of traditional media in China, have begun to incorporate the Internet and other new technologies, like blogs, into their journalism practice. As a matter of fact, the Internet is not only an unprecedented challenge to newspapers in China, but also an important opportunity. They value the development of the World Wide Web greatly, being excited about the idea of “blogs” and developing them in order to provide innovative news products and seize the attention of readers.

Some famous blogs and mainstream media outlets have begun to develop a symbiotic relationship, depending on each other to have something to talk about and promote certain issues of significant social concern together. Moreover, realizing blogs’ potential in interactivity between newspapers and readers, news organizations in China have begun to move in the direction of providing j-blogs on their websites as an additional opportunity for readers to interact personally with journalists. Integrating blogs with traditional newspapers gives birth to an innovative news product. The rise of j-blogs also provides an opportunity for newspapers to establish a new relationship with readers in the future.

### **Gatekeeping in Journalists’ Blogs**

#### **Gatekeeping Theory**

Obviously, the journalist is a key factor in the j-blog. Traditionally, journalists have assumed the role of gatekeepers, gathering and organizing timely information, filtering the world

through institutional routines, deciding what is worth knowing by the public, and helping to establish a society's values (Singer, 2006). However, journalists as j-bloggers have to relinquish at least part of their gatekeeping power to readers because of blogs' participatory and interactive nature. Studies have indicated that the journalists' self-perceptions as individuals who decide what people need to know is deeply ingrained (Janowitz, 1975). And how j-bloggers perform the gatekeeping function and transform their role from traditional journalists is a critical issue to the j-blogs.

Gatekeeping is defined as "the decision-making process by which the vast array of potential news messages are winnowed, shaped, and prodded into those few that are actually transmitted by the news media" (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001, p. 233). It is about opening or closing the channels of communication; it is about accessing or refusing access (Watson, 2003). Gatekeeping in mass communication is "the overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed" (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001, p. 233). Presentation, production, and space constraints contribute to the gatekeeping process, as well as editors' opinion about news content (White, 1950; Snider, 1967).

The concept "gatekeeping" was first proposed by psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947) and later applied to the news selection process in journalism by White (1950). Subsequent research has revealed some influential factors for gatekeeping: "the personal views, experiences and roles of media workers, media norms and routines, media organizations, external pressures, and ideology" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, pp. 105-119). Shoemaker (1999) identified five levels of gatekeeping: individual, routine, organizational characteristics, extramedia and ideological.

Generally speaking, gatekeepers are those who select and deliver information that flows over the communication channel, shaping what should be finally presented. As a few individuals

determining what stories will and will not be covered in the mass media, gatekeepers implicitly define the limits of discourse on an issue and help maintain the status quo by their selection of news content, exerting power on the public agenda and public opinion.

Gatekeeping theory provides a helpful framework for evaluating the judgments made on whether or not and how information should be included into the limited available space or time on media outlets (Reese & Ballinger, 2001), including new media such as blogs in which citizen participation counts.

### **New Gatekeeping in Journalists' Blogs**

J-bloggers, from writing for newspapers to maintaining j-blogs on newspaper websites, are experiencing changes in their roles as gatekeepers. As traditional journalists for newspapers, j-bloggers have exclusive control over what news is published and what information is told to readers in their own posts on j-blogs. However, j-bloggers are not able to organize reader comments. Therefore, the process of gatekeeping in j-blogs differs from that in newspapers because the content of j-blogs is not only created by j-bloggers but also co-produced by readers. J-blog readers can comment on j-blog posts and further utilize hyperlinks to add information. In other words, the responsibility for gatekeeping in j-blogs is shared by readers and j-bloggers.

Studies have indicated that j-bloggers' gatekeeping function is evolving and adapting along with the growth of new media. Singer (1997) found that journalists have been modifying definitions of the gatekeeper to encompass a need for interpretation and quality control. The gatekeepers in the new media environment are more concerned with supporting the value and ideas of what they disseminate rather than selecting stories for distribution. Journalists need a sense of their relationship with a democratized public in their work as gatekeepers (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). However, Singer (2005) stated that political j-bloggers are "retaining their traditional journalistic gatekeeping role by incorporating limited or no material from users,

despite the inherently conversational and participatory nature of the format” (Singer, 2005, p.189). These journalists just “normalize” the new form, blogs, to fit the old norms of journalism and continue to be gatekeepers as before. Further, Singer (2006) argued that in the new media environment, with the participation of j-blogs, journalists become sense-makers, bolstering the value of information they distribute, rather than gatekeepers. In any case, no matter how journalists or j-bloggers are playing their roles as gatekeepers online, they are putting more efforts into open conversations and collaborations.

### **Variances of Different Geographic Regions in China**

Mainland China is composed of 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, each with its own economy and culture. Generally speaking, mainland China is divided into three different geographic regions: East, Middle and West. The East includes Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan. The Middle includes provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Anhui and Jiangxi. The West includes Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang (CNNIC, January 2007).

East China is more a more developed coastal region, while West and Middle China are less developed inland regions. The differences among the three regions are reflected in varying economic development, culture, social values and technology adoption (Fram, Lu, & McHardy, 2004; Liu & Li, 2006). For economic development, compared with less developed Middle and West regions, coastal cities in the East China have a longer history of economic reform and more exposure to a market economy (Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006). A majority of the special economic zones, open cities, and main industrial and commercial centers are located in East China. For example, Beijing and Shanghai, China’s political capital and commercial capital, are located in

the East, contributing a great deal to the country's overall GDP and pioneering cultural development.

In addition, China's population is highly concentrated. A vast majority of people live in the plains of the East, whereas the other regions of the country are relatively unpopulated. Specifically, the top six provinces and municipals contributed almost half of the total population whereas the remaining 25 provinces, autonomous regions and municipals contributed the other half (China Knowledge, 2007).

Largely due to the uneven levels of economic development and population distribution, media markets in China have been characterized as highly heterogeneous (Law, Tse, & Zhou, 2003). East China is the region where a great many newspapers and newspaper websites are produced. He and Zhu (2002) pointed out that the uneven distribution of online newspapers follows the pattern of uneven development, especially the economic development, of the three regions in China. The majority of China's online newspapers are located in the East, followed by the Middle and the West (He & Zhu, 2002). The regional distribution of population in China is uneven, with 39.4% of the population in the East, 32.5% in the Middle, and 28.1% in the West (Keidel, 2007). Also, regional distribution of Internet users in China is uneven, with 57.9% of Internet users in the East, 22.8% in the Middle, and 19.3% in the West (CNNIC, January 2007). Given all these substantial regional differences among the East, Middle and West China (Child, Stewart, 1997), the degree of development of newspaper websites and j-blogs on the websites varies greatly across the three different regions in China.

### **Gender and Journalists' Blogs**

#### **Gender Theory**

Gender, on which some social status differences are based, is not only a biological concept but also a social construct that specifies cultural roles for men and women in the society.

Previous research on gender, mass media and society has shown how males and females differ in diverse aspects of social life. Many of these differences originate from the gender roles and social norms that indicate what socially appropriate male and female behavior is.

An important ideology of gender theory within the context of public discourse, mass media and technology is the “patriarchal notion of public/private dichotomy associated with male/female” (Harp & Tremayne, 2006, p. 249). It designates that the world of women is largely limited to the private sphere of life, such as home, family, private relations and domestic affairs. In contrast, men are believed to be best suited and responsible for the public sphere, including politics, economics and foreign affairs (Donovan, 1994; Harp & Tremayne, 2006). This dichotomy helps “articulate a hegemonic conceptualization of gender politics reinforced in everyday life” (Harp & Tremayne, 2006, p. 249). Based on this dichotomy, different social roles are developed for men and women, who are expected to conform to these traditional gender norms.

In the era of the Internet, real-life gender dynamics are reproduced online. Many gender differences found on the Internet are continuations of real-life situations (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004). For example, as in the real world, males are more likely to dominate online conversations (Morahan-Martin, 2000). Scholars have pointed out that the perpetuation of gender stereotypes on the Internet is a hazard to feminism (Morahan-Martin, 2000). However, other researchers have claimed that the Internet allows women to be liberated from the restrictions of gender identity and oppressive social structures. As a result, they predicted that women would be empowered in the online world (Morahan-Martin, 2000; Youngs, 2004).

Concerning gender and the Internet, the digital gender gap and the gendered structure of the Internet were often discussed (Morahan-Martin, 1998) in the early days of Internet

development. Social and cultural factors have shaped male-dominated adoption and use of the Internet as well as the deep involvement of men in online participation (Harp & Tremayne, 2006; Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004). Some authors have declared that power is not distributed equally online. Women are late adopters of the technology, which may increase the existing social inequities to females and impinge on women's power and possibilities in the Digital Age (Morahan-Martin, 2000; Youngs, 2004). Other research has suggested that despite more online participation by both males and females over time, gender differences in specific activities have not diminished. Men continue to have more positive attitudes toward the Internet and new technology than women (Sherman, End, Kraan, Cole, Campbell, Birchmeier, & Klausner, 2000). These findings are quite consistent with the situation in China today.

With a total population of 1,329,349,388 in 2007, the rate of males to females in China is 1.06:1 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008). The gender disparity is partially caused by the preference for boys under the "one-child" policy. For the use of the Internet in China, the number of female Internet users was 73 million and males was 89 million, for a ratio of 54.9% male to 45.1% female Internet users (CNNIC, July 2007). In contrast, among blog writers, men accounted for 43% of bloggers while women represented 57% (CNNIC, December 2007). In the news industry, there has been male dominance. In 1996, women journalists accounted for only one third of the total journalist population. By the end of 2006, although there have been more than 70,000 female journalists registered at the State Press and Publication Administration, nearly 40% of the total 180,000 journalists in China (Lu, 2006), male journalists are still the majority in news rooms. Therefore, despite the higher popularity of blogs among female Internet users, there are still more male j-bloggers than female j-bloggers in China now.

## **Influence of Gender on Blogs**

Previous research in America has revealed that there are more male bloggers than female bloggers (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004; Fallows, 2005). In addition, mass media have paid a greater amount of attention to male bloggers (Herring, Kouper, et al., 2004). In analyses of the topic differences in blogs maintained by males versus females, research has shown that men are more interested in blogging about politics, technology, and external events. Women bloggers are more likely to prefer personal subject matter (Herring, Kouper, et al., 2004). Some studies have shown that men are more likely to express political opinions and tend to have a more authoritative manner in their conversation style (Fredrick, 1999; Herring, 2006). In regard to the format variances in blogs written by different genders, some studies in America as well as in Britain have shown that women write more diary-like blogs, while male bloggers write more of the opinion-focused ones (Herring, & Paolillo, 2006; Pedersen, & Macafee, 2007). Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl and Sapp (2006) revealed that female bloggers provide a record of the day, discuss memories, and communicate feelings or thoughts more often than males.

In regard to gender differences in the inclusion of hyperlinks and multimedia usage, women are less interested in and have less knowledge about the technical aspects of the Internet (Fallows, 2005; Pedersen & Macafee, 2007), which seems likely to affect the use of hyperlinks and multimedia by female j-bloggers. In fact, Pedersen and Macafee (2007) pointed out that, compared with female bloggers, male bloggers include more links to interesting external websites.

Taking the interactive potential of the Internet and blogs into consideration, Herring (1996) reported that cyber-participants enact gender and develop communication styles that resemble offline gender identities. Other studies have noted differences in how men and women use the Internet, with women more likely to use it as a communication tool and men as a means of

information seeking (Jackson, Ervin, Gardner, & Schmitt, 2001). Other research has confirmed that female bloggers exhibited social interaction motivations more often than males (Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmohl, & Sapp, 2006).

### **Research Questions**

This study is aimed at analyzing j-blogs in China, including their topics, formats, interactivity and use of hyperlinks and multimedia technology, exploring the implications of such journalistic practices for journalism in China. Regional differences in China and gender differences in Internet using and blogging have been well documented. The researcher also expected to find differences in j-blogs from different geographic regions of China and in j-blogs written by male and female journalists. Therefore, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: What are the most common topics and formats of j-blogs in China? Do the topics vary among the formats?

RQ2: Do topics and formats of j-blogs in China differ by geographic regions or genders?

RQ3: How frequently do readers comment on j-blog posts in China? Does topic, format, geographic region or gender make a difference?

RQ4: How frequently do j-bloggers respond to reader comments in Chinese j-blog posts? Do j-blog posts with more reader comments get proportionally more j-blogger responses? Does topic, format, geographic region or gender make a difference?

RQ5: How many j-blog posts include one or more onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks, pictures, videos and audio? Does topic, format, geographic region, or gender influence the use of hyperlinks and multimedia?

RQ6: What are the relationships among frequency of hyperlinks, multimedia, reader comments, and j-blogger responses?

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The study was aimed at examining the general development of j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China by exploring the main characteristics of j-blogs in China, in terms of topic, format, interactivity (comments from readers and responses from journalists), hyperlinks and multimedia usage. Geographic region and gender were two factors believed to have a possible influence on these characteristics. The method for this study was content analysis.

Content analysis is defined as,

a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented (Neuendorf, 2002, p.10).

Lomlard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken (2002) stated that content analysis, as a method specifically for the study of messages, is fundamental to mass communication research. To examine the general performance of j-blogs in this study, content analysis was appropriate because it is “particularly well suited to the study of communications and to answer the classic question of communication research: ‘Who says what’ ... and ‘how’...” (Babbie, 2007, p. 320).

### **Population**

Chinese j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China were the subject of study. They were chosen if they were 1) published on a newspaper website; 2) identified as blogs written by journalists, accompanied by journalist information; 3) started on or before January 1, 2007; 4) written in Chinese; 5) included no fewer than 30 blog posts from January 1, 2007, to December 31, 2007.

Because there was neither a complete directory of j-blogs or newspaper websites nor a complete list of newspapers in China that was publicly available, the search for j-blogs that met

the standards above was completed in several ways: First, j-blogs were found through an examination of links to some well-known online publications such as Xinhua News Agency ([www.xinhuanet.com](http://www.xinhuanet.com)), which is the state news agency and the largest news and information gathering and distribution center in Mainland China, as well as the *People's Daily* ([www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)), which is the most influential and authoritative newspaper in China. Additionally, qualified j-blogs were found through the Chinese newspapers directory maintained by the University of Auckland, online media directories provided by the All-China Journalists Association ([www.zgjx.cn](http://www.zgjx.cn)), and newspaper websites linked to important regional newspapers, such as the *South Daily* ([www.nanfangdaily.com.cn](http://www.nanfangdaily.com.cn)), and the two biggest commercial news websites in Mainland China, Sohu ([news.sohu.com](http://news.sohu.com)) and Sina ([news.sina.com.cn](http://news.sina.com.cn)). Then, search engines Google, Baidu<sup>1</sup> and Yahoo were used to search for j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China. In this way, the researcher tried to find as many j-blogs as possible on Chinese newspaper websites. All accessible j-blogs that met the criteria for this study were compiled into a list as the population for the study.

### **Sample and Sampling Method**

To better represent j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China and the differences between different geographic regions, nonprobability sampling was used.

All the j-blogs in the study population were divided by the geographic regions of the newspapers hosting the j-blogs. Mainland China's 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions can be divided into three regions, according to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, January 2007). The three regions are the West region, which includes the provinces of Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi,

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<sup>1</sup> Baidu is a search engine in China, which is as important in China as Google in the U.S. It is quite useful to search for webpages, news, blogs, images and music in Chinese characters.

Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang; the Middle region, which includes provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Anhui and Jiangxi; and the East region, which includes provinces of Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan. Based on geographic region, the j-blogs were divided into three categories: j-blogs in the East, j-blogs in the Middle, and j-blogs in the West. For each category, qualified j-blogs were compiled into an index alphabetically by the names of their authors. Each j-blog in the list was given an identification number. Then 15 j-blogs were randomly chosen from each category with the help of a random number generator. Finally, 45 j-blogs in Mainland China were chosen for the study.

Within those chosen j-blogs, 14 dates were randomly picked from January 1, 2007, to December 31, 2007, representing two constructed weeks. Following the two-constructed-week scheme, two Sundays, two Mondays, two Tuesdays, two Wednesdays, two Thursdays, two Fridays and two Saturdays were randomly chosen from all of the Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in 2007. This method is effective in helping researchers to examine representative samples of news content without oversampling (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). Some research has shown that constructed week sampling is far more efficient than simple random sampling when inferring to a large population (Riffe, Aust, & Lacy, 1993).

Posts on selected j-blogs on those particular dates were the sample for this study. However, the journalists did not always update their j-blogs on those days. In the absence of a j-blog post on that particular date, the nearest post after that date was found to fill the sample. And if the j-blogger had two posts on the j-blogs that day, only the first one was used. So, the sample for this

study consisted of 630 j-blog posts on newspaper websites in Mainland China. The unit of analysis was the individual j-blog post.

### **Variables**

The variables coded for each j-blog post were the newspaper affiliation, URL of the j-blog post, name or online ID of the j-blogger, geographic region of the newspaper hosting the j-blog, gender of the j-blogger, general topic addressed in the j-blog post, number of comments from readers in each j-blog post, number of responses from the j-bloggers for each j-blog post, number of onsite hyperlinks in each j-blog post, number of offsite hyperlinks in each j-blog post, number of videos included in each j-blog post, number of audio files included in each j-blog post, number of pictures included in each j-blog post, and the format of j-blog post. By coding these variables, j-blogs could be examined in terms of topic, format, interactivity, use of hyperlinks and multimedia technology. Differences in j-blogs between three geographic regions and different genders also were examined. Hence, an overview of how journalists in China are using the novel online format of j-blogs to publish news and communicate with readers was provided. The definitions of variables coded in this study were described in the content analysis codebook (see Appendix A).

### **Coders and Intercoder Reliability**

Coders were two Chinese students at the University of Florida who fully understand written Chinese and are familiar with the provinces as well as geographic regions in China. They used the codebook (Appendix A) and coding sheet (Appendix B) to analyze the variables.

Given that a goal of content analysis is to “identify and record relatively objective (or at least intersubjective) characteristics of messages, reliability is paramount” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 141), intercoder reliability, “the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion” (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002,

p. 589) is often perceived as the typical measure of research quality and is at the heart of this research method. Kolbe and Burnett (1991) said that “high levels of disagreement among judges suggest weaknesses in research methods, including the possibility of poor operational definitions, categories, and judge training” (p. 248).

To ensure the quality of this study, coders were trained before official coding for the study began. Coders tested the initial draft of the codebook by independently coding 70 Chinese j-blog posts that were not included in the sample, using the codebook developed for this study. Based on this test, coding problems and disagreements were discussed, and the instrument was revised. This process was repeated several times until it was believed that the coding instrument for this study would permit reliable coding by two coders.

Scott’s  $\pi^2$  was used to assess intercoder reliability in this study. The appropriate minimum acceptable level of reliability for Scott’s  $\pi$  is .70 or above. If  $\pi$  equals .80 or above, the intercoder reliability is “very good, always acceptable;” a  $\pi$  of .70 might be termed “good, acceptable in most situations;” .60 “adequate,” and .50 or below “poor” (Neuendorf, 2002).

A pilot test was conducted. Coders used the codebook to independently code 65 posts randomly selected from the sample. For the first time, the reliability level in the pilot test for two variables was inadequate. So, additional training was conducted. The coding instrument and procedures were refined. When a second pilot test was conducted, the reliability level was acceptable.

Proceeding to the full sample, 126 j-blog posts, representing 20% of the full sample, were randomly selected by the researcher and provided to both coders in order to establish intercoder

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<sup>2</sup> Scott’s  $\pi = \frac{\text{Proportion of observed agreement} - \text{Proportion of expected agreement}}{1 - \text{Proportion of expected agreement}}$

Proportion of observed agreement =  $\frac{\text{Number of coders} * \text{Number of same coding made}}{\text{Total number of coding by all coders}}$

Proportion of expected agreement =  $\sum \text{Proportion in each category}^2$

reliability. Half of the rest of the sample was then randomly assigned to each coder. They coded independently, following the guidance of the codebook. During the process of coding for the full sample, tests of intercoder reliability were conducted from time to time to keep sufficient intercoder reliability all through the coding process. With the help of PRAM software, the intercoder reliability of all variables in the study was tabulated and found to be reported higher than 0.85<sup>3</sup> for each variable.

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<sup>3</sup> Reported Intercoder reliability for variables: Pictures = .98, gender = .975, j-blogger responses = .975, onsite hyperlinks = .949, offsite hyperlinks = .949, reader comments = .945, format = .932, hyperlinks in reader comments = .93, topic = .88. Intercoder reliability for all other variables is 1.

CHAPTER 4  
RESULTS

The content analysis data were analyzed using the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 15 for Windows) based on the research questions.

**Topic and Format**

Research Question 1 looked at the topic and format of j-blog posts in China.

A frequency analysis showed that the most frequently addressed topics in Chinese j-blogs were lifestyle and politics/government/military (Table 4-1). About 10% of Chinese j-blogs were about crime/accidents/disasters and another 10% covered business/economic activity.

Celebrity/entertainment and science/technology were the least frequently talked about. Looking at the formats of Chinese j-blog posts, the most common were the straight opinion column, rumor-mill blog, and reporter’s notebook of new tidbits and incidentals; readership forums and question-and-answer formats were the least used (Table 4-2).

Table 4-1. Frequency of j-blog posts across topics and format

		Frequency	Percent
Topic	Lifestyle	321	42.5
	Politics, government and military	139	18.4
	Crime, accidents, disasters	77	10.2
	Business/economic activity	76	10.1
	Other	61	8.1
	Celebrity/entertainment	51	6.7
	Science/technology	31	4.1
Format	Straight column of opinion for the Web	226	29.9
	Rumor-mill blog that the reporter uses as an off-the-record account	191	25.3
	Reporter’s notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	121	16.0
	Copy of articles from others with the source stated	61	8.1
	Round-up of news summaries that promote the print publication	57	7.5
	Poetry	40	5.3
	Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	28	3.7
	Readership forum	26	3.4
	Question-and-answer format by editors	6	.8

Because the numerous topics and formats led to too many cells with an expected count less than 5, only the top five most frequently used formats were examined. A Chi-square analysis of topics and the top five formats revealed a significant relationship ( $\chi^2(24, N = 607) = 149.178, p < .001$ ). The formats of Chinese j-blog posts varied by topics. Straight opinion column, reporter’s notebook of news tidbits and incidentals and copy of articles were the most often used formats when talking about politics/government/military, business/economic activity and science/technology. For crime/accidents/disasters, nearly 40% of those j-blog posts turned out to be straight columns of opinion and another 34% were notebooks of news tidbits and incidentals. Half of j-blog posts about lifestyle were rumor-mill blogs (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2. Crosstabulation of topic and format for j-blog posts

		Topic					
		Politics	Business	Crime	Science	Entertainment	Lifestyle
Formats	Reporter’s notebook of news tidbits	23 18.4%	13 19.4%	22 34.4%	7 25.0%	10 20.4%	34 12.4%
	Straight column of opinion	61 48.8%	34 50.7%	25 39.1%	7 25.0%	21 42.9%	58 21.2%
	News summaries	15 12.0%	5 7.5%	6 9.4%	2 7.1%	5 10.2%	23 8.4%
	Rumor-mill blog	10 8.0%	7 10.4%	6 9.4%	5 17.9%	8 16.3%	139 50.7%
	Copy of articles from others	16 12.8%	8 11.9%	5 7.8%	7 25.0%	5 10.2%	20 7.3%
Total		125 100.0%	67 100.0%	64 100.0%	28 100.0%	49 100.0%	274 100.0%

\*  $\chi^2(24, N = 607) = 149.178, p < .001$

Research Question 2 examined the influence of geographic region and gender on topic and format of j-blog posts. A Chi-square analysis and crosstabulation revealed a significant difference in topics across geographic regions ( $\chi^2(12, N = 756) = 40.971, p < .001$ ). At the beginning of this study, when collecting j-blogs for the study population, the researcher found

that the number of j-blogs in East China far exceeded that in Middle and West China. As shown in Table 4-3, the topics of j-blog posts differed greatly by geographic regions. Although the most common topics in all of the three regions were the same — lifestyle and politics, some topics were more popular in a region than in the other two regions. For example, j-blog posts about lifestyle and crime/accidents/disasters were more popular in East China; j-blog posts covering politics and economics were more popular in the West.

Table 4-3. Crosstabulation of j-blog topics by geographic regions

Topic	Geographic Region			Total
	East	Middle	West	
Politics, government, military	33 13.4%	46 18.2%	60 23.3%	139 18.4%
Business/economic activity	28 11.4%	16 6.3%	32 12.5%	76 10.1%
Crime, accidents and disasters	29 11.8%	23 9.1%	25 9.7%	77 10.2%
Science/technology	3 1.2%	19 7.5%	9 3.5%	31 4.1%
Celebrity/entertainment	10 4.1%	20 7.9%	21 8.2%	51 6.7%
Lifestyle	128 52.0%	106 41.9%	87 33.9%	321 42.5%
Other	15 6.1%	23 9.1%	23 8.9%	61 8.1%
Total	246 100.0%	253 100.0%	257 100.0%	756 100.0%

\*  $\chi^2(12, N = 756) = 40.971, p < .001$

Of all the blog posts in this study, 72% were written by males, and 28% were maintained by females. Examining the bloggers' genders and the topics, a Chi-square analysis and crosstabulation revealed a significant difference of topics across genders ( $\chi^2(12, N = 740) = 41.004, p < .001$ ). Although lifestyle was the most frequently addressed topic for both genders, women focused on this topic 52.7% of the time versus 38.1% for men. Females were also more likely to talk about business and economics. Males were more likely to talk about politics/government/military and science/technology (Table 4-4).

Table 4-4. Crosstabulation of j-blog topics by gender

		Gender	
		Male	Female
Topic	Politics, government, military	118 22.1%	19 9.2%
	Business/economic activity	47 8.8%	24 11.6%
	Crime, accidents and disasters	55 10.3%	22 10.6%
	Science/technology	28 5.3%	3 1.4%
	Celebrity/entertainment	36 6.8%	15 7.2%
	Lifestyle	203 38.1%	109 52.7%
	Others	46 8.6%	15 7.2%
	Total	533 100.0%	207 100.0%

\*  $\chi^2(12, N = 740) = 41.004, p < .001$

Table 4-5. Crosstabulation of j-blog formats by geographic regions

		Geographic Region			
		East	Middle	West	Total
Format	Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	33 13.4%	42 16.6%	46 17.9%	121 16.0%
	Straight column of opinion for the Web	63 25.6%	68 26.9%	95 37.0%	226 29.9%
	Question-and-answer format by editors	2 .8%	3 1.2%	1 .4%	6 .8%
	Readership forum	12 4.9%	6 2.4%	8 3.1%	26 3.4%
	Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	10 4.1%	3 1.2%	15 5.8%	28 3.7%
	Round-up of news summaries	13 5.3%	35 13.8%	9 3.5%	57 7.5%
	Rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	82 33.3%	54 21.3%	55 21.4%	191 25.3%
	Copy of articles from others with the source stated	24 9.8%	17 6.7%	20 7.8%	61 8.1%
	Poetry	7 2.8%	25 9.9%	8 3.1%	40 5.3%
Total		246 100.0%	253 100.0%	257 100.0%	756 100.0%

\*  $\chi^2(16, N = 756) = 65.771, p < .001$

There was also a significant difference between formats by different geographic regions ( $\chi^2(16, N = 756) = 65.771, p < .001$ ). Table 4-5 shows that the most frequently used format in East China was rumor-mill blog (33.3%); the most often used format of j-blogs in Middle and West China was straight opinion column, followed by rumor-mill blog and news notebook format. It was also found that j-bloggers in the East used more readership forums and citations of articles, compared with the Middle and the West; j-bloggers in the Middle were more likely to summarize news and write poetry in their j-blogs.

A Chi-square analysis of gender and format revealed a significant difference of j-blog posts' formats across different genders ( $\chi^2(8, N = 756) = 63.416, p < .001$ ). Table 4-6 shows that male j-bloggers were more likely to use straight opinion column (34.7%) while female j-bloggers were more likely to use rumor-mill blogs (40.1%).

Table 4-6. Crosstabulation of j-blog formats by gender

		Gender	
		Male	Female
Format	Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	95 17.8%	25 12.1%
	Straight column of opinion for the Web	185 34.7%	41 19.8%
	Question-and-answer format by editors	6 1.1%	0 .0%
	Readership forum	14 2.6%	12 5.8%
	Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	22 4.1%	6 2.9%
	Round-up of news summaries	32 6.0%	23 11.1%
	Rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	105 19.7%	83 40.1%
	Copy of articles from others with the source stated	36 6.8%	16 7.7%
	Poetry	38 7.1%	1 .5%
Total		533 100.0%	207 100.0%

\*  $\chi^2(8, N = 756) = 63.416, p < .001$

## Reader Comments

Research Question 3 looked at the frequency of reader comments on Chinese j-blog posts as well as the influence of topic, format, geographic region and gender on reader comments.

The frequency analysis of reader comments in j-blog posts in China (Table 4-6) showed that nearly 40% of all posts had no comment from readers. Almost a third of posts had one or two comments, and 20.8% had five or more comments. The most comments, 59, appeared in a blog post with the format of a readership forum, in which the j-blogger invited her readers to climb mountains together for the weekend.

Table 4-7. Frequency of reader comments in j-blog posts in China

Number of reader comments	Frequency	Percent
0	283	37.4%
1	138	18.3%
2	83	11.0%
3	55	7.3%
4	39	5.2%
5	26	3.4%
6	18	2.3%
7	17	2.2%
8	14	1.9%
9	11	1.5%
10	9	1.2%
11-59	63	8.3%
Total	756	100.0%

Looking only at the 473 posts that generated reader comments, the relationships of reader comment frequency with topic, format, geographic region and gender were examined. Because nearly 40% of j-blog posts studied had no comments, only analyzing the mean number of reader comments by topics, formats, regions and genders of all posts would make the study moot. To be more objective, proportion tests were conducted, followed by one-way ANOVA analyses.

Table 4-8 shows that j-blog posts about crime/accidents/disasters were the highest in the proportion of j-blog posts with comments (66.2%) with the j-blog posts about science/technology the lowest (48.4%).

Table 4-8. Proportion of reader comments for j-blog posts among topics

Topic	Number of posts with comments	Total number of posts	Proportion
Others	46	61	75.4%
Crime, accidents, disasters	51	77	66.2%
Celebrity/entertainment	33	51	64.7%
Lifestyle	199	321	62.0%
Business/economic activity	47	76	61.8%
Politics, government, military	82	139	59.0%
Science/technology	15	31	48.4%
Total	473	756	62.6%

Table 4-9 shows that j-blog posts in the format of confessional diary were the highest in the proportion of j-blog posts that have comments (78.6%) with the j-blog posts in the format of news summary the lowest (29.8%). Readership forum and rumor-mill blog had relatively high proportion of reader comments.

Table 4-9. Proportion of reader comments for j-blog posts among formats

Format	Number of posts with comments	Total number of posts	Proportion
Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	22	28	78.6%
Readership forum	19	26	73.1%
Rumor-mill blog	131	191	68.6%
Question-and-answer format by editors	4	6	66.7%
Straight column of opinion for the Web	147	226	65.0%
Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	78	121	64.5%
Poetry	24	40	60.0%
Copy of articles from others with the source stated	31	61	50.8%
Round-up of news summaries	17	57	29.8%
Total	473	756	62.6%

Table 4-10 shows that j-blog posts in the East were the highest in the proportion of j-blog posts that have comments (69.9%) with the j-blog posts in the Middle the lowest (49.4%).

Table 4-10. Proportion of reader comments for j-blog posts among regions

Geographic region	Number of posts with comments	Total number of posts	Proportion
East	172	246	69.9%
West	176	257	65.5%
Middle	125	253	49.4%
Total	473	756	62.6%

Table 4-11 shows that j-blog posts by females were slightly higher than those by males in the proportion of j-blog posts with reader comments (67.2% versus 62.1%).

Table 4-11. Proportion of reader comments for j-blog posts between genders

Gender	Number of posts with comments	Total number of posts	Proportion
Female	139	207	67.2%
Male	331	533	62.1%
Total	470	740	62.2%

A one-way ANOVA analysis of all blog posts revealed a significant main effect with topic ( $F(6,755) = 3.297, p < .01$ ) on reader comments. A post-hoc analysis of reader comment and topic using Bonferroni's test revealed significant differences in reader comments between celebrity/entertainment ( $M = 7.53, SD = 14.936$ ) and science/technology ( $M = 1.65, SD = 2.259$ ), and between celebrity/entertainment and politics/government/military ( $M = 2.47, SD = 4.019$ ). Obviously, j-blog posts with the topic of science/technology and politics/government/military had the smallest mean number of comments, while celebrity/entertainment posts had the highest mean number of reader comments (Table 4-12).

Table 4-12. Mean number of reader comments among topics

Topic	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Celebrity/entertainment	51	7.53	14.936
Crime, accidents, disasters	77	4.52	8.042
Lifestyle	321	4.32	8.915
Others	61	3.34	4.509
Business/economic activity	76	3.14	6.026
Politics, government, military	139	2.47	4.019
Science/technology	31	1.65	2.259
Total	756	3.91	8.063

\*  $F(6,755) = 3.297, p < .01$

Another one-way ANOVA analysis of all blog posts revealed a significant main effect of format ( $F(8,755) = 6.073, p < .001$ ) on reader comments. A post-hoc analysis of reader comment and format, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference in reader comments between readership forum and all other formats except question-and-answer formats and confessional diary. The highest mean number of comments was for the format of readership forum ( $M = 12.19, SD = 15.955$ ) while the blog posts in almost all the other formats had averages of less than 5 comments. The formats of question-and-answer ( $M = 12, SD = 15.761$ ) and confessional diary ( $M = 5.50, SD = 7.724$ ) had relatively more comments (Table 4-13).

Table 4-13. Mean number of reader comments among formats

Format	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Readership forum	26	12.19	15.955
Question-and-answer format by editors	6	12.00	15.761
Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	28	5.50	7.724
Copy of articles from others with the source stated	61	5.15	12.022
Rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	191	4.38	8.040
Straight column of opinion for the Web	226	3.12	6.064
Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	121	3.08	6.795
Poetry	40	1.95	3.693
Round-up of news summaries	57	1.88	5.298
Total	756	3.91	8.063

\*  $F(8,755) = 6.073, p < .001$

A one-way ANOVA analysis of all blog posts revealed a significant main effect with geographic region ( $F(2,755) = 28.616, p < .001$ ) on reader comments. A post-hoc analysis of reader comment and geographic region, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference in reader comments among the three regions. Table 4-14 shows that j-blog posts in the East had the highest mean number of comments ( $M = 6.78, SD = 11.606$ ), and posts in the Middle had the lowest mean number of comments ( $M = 1.57, SD = 3.902$ ).

Another one-way ANOVA analysis of all blog posts revealed a significant main effect with gender ( $F(1,739) = 27.620, p < .001$ ) on reader comments. Table 4-15 shows that reader

comments differed significantly for j-blog posts by men and women. Female j-bloggers had twice the average number of comments ( $M = 6.42$ ,  $SD = 12.040$ ) as male j-bloggers ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 5.635$ ).

Table 4-14. Mean number of reader comments among geographic regions

Geographic region	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
East	246	6.78	11.606
West	257	3.47	5.857
Middle	253	1.57	3.902
Total	756	3.91	8.063

\*  $F(2,755) = 28.616$ ,  $p < .001$

Table 4-15. Mean number of reader comments between genders

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	207	6.42	12.040
Male	533	2.99	5.635
Total	740	3.95	8.102

\*  $F(1,739) = 27.620$ ,  $p < .001$

### J-bloggers' Responses

Research Question 4 examined the frequency of j-bloggers' responses to reader comments on j-blog posts in China, as well as the influence of topic, format, geographic region, gender, and reader comments on j-bloggers' responses. Frequency analysis, one-way ANOVA and Chi-square analyses were applied.

Because responses were provided by j-bloggers to reader comments on their j-blogs, it is reasonable to analyze the j-bloggers' responses in relationship to reader comments. To measure the frequency of j-bloggers' responses, Table 4-16 shows that, in the 473 j-blog posts that had one or more reader comments, 350 posts (74.0%) did not have any response from j-bloggers, 76 j-blog posts (16.1%) had one j-blogger response, and the remaining 47 j-blog posts (9.9%) had 2-28 responses.

Also, a Pearson's correlation analysis revealed that the number of reader comments was positively related with the number of j-bloggers' responses ( $r(756) = .462, p < .001$ ). The j-blog posts with more reader comments were more likely to have more j-blogger responses.

Table 4-16. Frequency of j-bloggers' responses in posts with one or more reader comments

Number of j-bloggers' responses	Frequency	Percent
0	350	74.0
1	76	16.1
2-3	26	5.5
4-5	10	2.2
More than 5	11	2.2
Total	473	100.0

Because j-bloggers were not likely to respond unless readers initiated comments, it is reasonable to filter out all the blog posts with zero comment when analyzing the influence of topic, format, geographic region and gender on j-blogger responses.

A one-way ANOVA analysis of only the posts that had at least one reader comment revealed a significant difference in the mean number of j-bloggers' responses among formats ( $F(8,472) = 10.917, p < .001$ ). A post-hoc analysis of j-bloggers' responses and format, using Bonferroni's test, revealed significant differences between the readership forum and all other formats. J-blog posts in the format of readership forum had the highest mean number of j-bloggers' responses ( $M = 4.68, SD = 7.173$ ), while the average number of j-bloggers' responses in all other formats was less than one (Table 4-17).

Another one-way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant main effect of gender on j-bloggers' responses ( $F(1,469) = 6.903, p < .01$ ). Table 4-18 shows that female j-bloggers were more likely to respond frequently to reader comments.

However, the one-way ANOVA analyses revealed no significant main effects of topic ( $F(6,472) = .876, p = .513$ ) or geographic region ( $F(2,472) = 2.646, p = .072$ ) on j-bloggers' responses.

Table 4-17. Mean number of j-bloggers' responses among formats

Format	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Readership forum	19	4.68	7.173
Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	22	.77	1.510
Rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	131	.75	2.285
Poetry	24	.54	1.414
Question-and-answer format by editors	4	.50	.577
Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	78	.46	.848
Straight column of opinion for the Web	147	.29	.633
Round-up of news summaries	17	.24	.562
Copy of articles from others with the source stated	31	.16	.374
Total	473	.65	2.142

\*  $F(8,472) = 10.917, p < .001$

Table 4-18. Mean number of j-bloggers' responses between genders

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	139	1.05	3.562
Male	331	.48	1.077
Total	470	.65	2.148

\*  $F(1,469) = 6.903, p < .01$

Also, the study found that the number of responses differed significantly depending upon the individual j-bloggers ( $F(31,124) = 1.906, p = .01$ ). Seven j-bloggers in 45 (16%) were responsible for 71.8% of the responses. Contrary to the previous finding that female j-bloggers were more likely to respond, six of these seven j-bloggers were male, although the only female j-blogger in the seven responded most frequently. And among the 45 j-bloggers in this study, 12 j-bloggers (27%) did not respond to any comments, indicating that the personal preferences or habits of j-bloggers were important.

### Hyperlinks and Multimedia

Research Question 5 looked at the use of hyperlinks and multimedia in Chinese j-blog posts. Frequency analyses of onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks, pictures, videos and audio were applied.

Table 4-19 shows how many j-blog posts had one or more onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks, and pictures.

Table 4-19. Frequency of onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks and pictures in j-blog posts

	Quantity	Frequency	Percent
Onsite hyperlinks	0	678	89.7
	1	44	5.8
	2	14	1.9
	3	6	.8
	4	2	.3
	5-15	11	.15
	More than 15	1	.1
	Total	756	100.0
Offsite hyperlinks	0	679	89.8
	1	48	6.3
	2	13	1.7
	3	4	.5
	4	4	.5
	5	2	.3
	More than 5	6	.8
	Total	756	100.0
Pictures	0	600	79.4
	1-2	85	11.3
	3-4	22	3
	5-6	18	2.4
	7-8	16	2.2
	9-15	9	.11
	More than 15	6	.7
	Total	756	100.0

As shown in the Table 4-19, 89.7% of j-blog posts had no onsite hyperlinks, 8.8% had 1-4 onsite hyperlinks, and the remaining .25% had more than 5 onsite hyperlinks. About 90% of j-blog posts did not have any offsite hyperlinks, 8% had 1-2 offsite hyperlinks. Onsite hyperlinks were more frequently used than offsite hyperlinks.

Compared with other multimedia features, pictures were the most frequently used. Nearly 80% of j-blog posts did not include pictures, 11.3% had 1-2 pictures, 5.4% had 3-6 pictures and the remaining 4% had 7-37 pictures. For the use of video and audio, only three j-blog posts

(0.4%) had one video and five j-blog posts (0.7%) had one audio, which suggested that the application of videos and audio was quite limited in Chinese j-blogs.

To measure the influence of topic, format, geographic region and gender on use of hyperlinks and multimedia, one-way ANOVA analysis was used. For topic, only a significant difference in the use of offsite hyperlinks ( $F(6,755) = 6.343, p < .001$ ) was found. A post-hoc analysis of topic and offsite hyperlink, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference of offsite hyperlinks between topic politics/government/military ( $M = .51, SD = 1.224$ ) and celebrity/entertainment ( $M = .04, SD = .196$ ), politics/government/military and lifestyle ( $M = .06, SD = .331$ ). Table 4-20 shows that posts about politics/government/military included more offsite hyperlinks on average while topic lifestyle and celebrity/entertainment had the least.

Table 4-20. Mean number of offsite hyperlinks among topics

	Topic	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Offsite hyperlinks	Politics, government, military	139	.51	1.224
	Crime, accidents, disasters	77	.35	1.156
	Science/technology	31	.23	.560
	Business/economic activity	76	.21	.549
	Others	61	.16	1.157
	Lifestyle	321	.06	.331
	Celebrity/entertainment	51	.04	.196
	Total	756	.20	.798

\*  $F(6,755) = 6.343, p < .001$

A one-way ANOVA analyses revealed a significant main effect with geographic regions on offsite hyperlink use ( $F(2, 755) = 3.71, p < .05$ ). A post-hoc analysis of geographic region and inclusion of offsite hyperlinks, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference between the East and the West. The Eastern j-blogs lead in the use of offsite hyperlinks ( $M = .31, SD = 1.116$ ) while those in the West were the least likely to include them ( $M = .14, SD = .463$ ) (Table 4-21).

Table 4-21. Mean number of offsite hyperlink among geographic regions

	Geographic region	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Offsite hyperlinks	East	246	.31	1.116
	Middle	253	.15	.679
	West	257	.14	.463
	Total	756	.20	.798

\*  $F(2, 755) = 3.71, p < .05$

Another one-way ANOVA analyses revealed a significant main effect with geographic regions on use of pictures ( $F(2,755) = .8.806, p < .001$ ). A post-hoc analysis of geographic region and use of pictures, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference between the West and the other two regions. J-blog posts in the West used pictures more frequently ( $M = 1.48, SD = 3.65$ ) than the East ( $M = .38, SD = 1.379$ ) and the Middle ( $M = .74, SD = 3.405$ ) (Table 4-22).

Table 4-22. Mean number of picture among geographic regions

	Geographic region	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pictures	West	257	1.48	3.650
	East	246	.38	1.379
	Middle	253	.74	3.405
	Total	756	.88	3.036

\*  $F(2,755) = 8.806, p < .001$

However, there were no significant effects of geographic region on use of onsite hyperlinks ( $F(2,755) = .1.567, p = .209$ ), video ( $F(2,755) = .000, p = 1$ ) or audio ( $F(2,755) = .205, p = .814$ ).

A one-way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in use of onsite hyperlinks between genders ( $F(1, 739) = 9.369, p < .01$ ) but no significant gender difference in use of offsite hyperlinks ( $F(1, 739) = 3.445, p = .64$ ), video ( $F(1, 739) = .043, p = .836$ ), audio ( $F(1, 739) = .361, p = .548$ ) or pictures ( $F(1, 739) = .014, p = .905$ ) between genders.

Table 4-23 shows that female j-bloggers used more onsite hyperlinks on average ( $M = .59, SD = 2.878$ ) than male j-bloggers ( $M = .17, SD = .835$ ).

Table 4-23. Mean number of onsite hyperlinks across genders

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Onsite hyperlinks	Female	207	.59	2.878
	Male	533	.17	.835
	Total	740	.29	1.687

\*  $F(1, 739) = 9.369, p < .01$

A one-way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in inclusion of onsite hyperlinks ( $F(8, 755) = 4.326, p < .001$ ) among formats. A post-hoc analysis, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference in inclusion of onsite hyperlinks between the news summary format and all the other formats except the question-and-answer and readership forum format. Table 4-24 shows that j-blog posts in the news summary format had the highest mean number of onsite hyperlinks ( $M = 1.47, SD = 5.336$ ). The question-and-answer format ( $M = .33, SD = .516$ ) and rumor-mill blogs ( $M = .30, SD = .973$ ) also included relatively more onsite hyperlinks.

Table 4-24. Mean number of onsite hyperlinks across formats

	Format	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Onsite hyperlinks	Round-up of news summaries	57	1.47	5.336
	Question-and-answer format by editors	6	.33	.516
	Rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	191	.30	.973
	Readership forum	26	.27	.452
	Copy of articles from others with the source stated	61	.20	1.181
	Straight column of opinion for the Web	226	.15	.723
	Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	28	.11	.416
	Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	121	.10	.455
	Poetry	40	.00	.000
	Total	756	.28	1.670

\*  $F(8, 755) = 4.326, p < .001$

A one-way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in inclusion of offsite hyperlinks ( $F(8, 755) = 6.425, p < .001$ ) among formats. A post-hoc analysis, using Bonferroni's test, revealed a significant difference in the use of offsite hyperlinks between straight opinion

columns ( $M = .5$ ,  $SD = 1.337$ ) and news notebooks ( $M = .06$ ,  $SD = .268$ ), rumor-mill blogs ( $M = .05$ ,  $SD = .212$ ) and poetry ( $M = .00$ ,  $SD = .000$ ). The straight opinion column format had the highest mean number of offsite hyperlinks (Table 4-25).

Table 4-25. Mean number of offsite hyperlinks across formats

	Format	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Offsite hyperlinks	A straight column of opinion for the Web	226	.50	1.337
	A question-and-answer format by editors	6	.33	.816
	A round-up of news summaries	57	.18	.539
	A copy of articles from others with the source stated	61	.15	.401
	A reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	121	.06	.268
	A rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	191	.05	.212
	A confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	28	.04	.189
	A readership forum	26	.00	.000
	Poetry	40	.00	.000
Total		756	.20	.798

\*  $F(8, 755) = 4.326$ ,  $p < .001$

Table 4-26. Mean number of pictures across formats

	Format	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pictures	A readership forum	26	2.00	6.765
	A reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals	121	1.61	2.724
	A round-up of news summaries	57	1.35	3.944
	A confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat	28	1.00	2.357
	A rumor-mill blog that reporter uses as an off-the-record account	191	.95	3.495
	A question-and-answer format by editors	6	.83	2.041
	Poetry	40	.58	3.320
	A copy of articles from others with the source stated	61	.38	1.098
	A straight column of opinion for the Web	226	.35	1.959
Total		756	.88	3.036

\*  $F(8, 755) = 2.679$ ,  $p < .01$

Another one-way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in use of pictures ( $F(8, 755) = 2.679$ ,  $p < .01$ ) among formats. A post-hoc analysis using Bonferroni's test revealed a

significant difference in use of pictures between the news notebook and straight opinion column formats. Posts in the format of news notebooks ( $M = 1.61, SD = 2.724$ ) had more pictures than straight opinion columns ( $M = .35, SD = 1.959$ ) (Table 4-26).

Then because nearly 80% of j-blog posts in this study did not have any pictures, 89.7% had no onsite hyperlinks and 89.8% had no offsite hyperlinks, when filtering out posts that had zero onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks, videos, audio, or pictures to analyze the influence of topic, format, geographic region and gender on hyperlink and multimedia by one-way ANOVA analyses, it was found that format (onsite hyperlink ( $F(7, 77) = .673, p = .694$ ), offsite hyperlink ( $F(6, 76) = 1.925, p = .089$ ), picture ( $F(8, 155) = 1.584, p = .134$ )) and gender (onsite hyperlink ( $F(1, 77) = 1.468, p = .229$ ), offsite hyperlink ( $F(1, 76) = .072, p = .789$ ), picture ( $F(1, 155) = 1.652, p = .201$ )) did not influence use of any hyperlink or multimedia, although the use of offsite hyperlinks still differed significantly between topics ( $F(6, 76) = 2.284, p < .05$ ) and regions ( $F(2, 76) = 10.499, p < .001$ ) in the same way; the use of pictures still differed significant between regions ( $F(2, 155) = 3.072, p < .05$ ) in the same way.

Research Question 6 examined the interrelationships between frequency of inclusion of hyperlinks and multimedia with reader comments and j-bloggers' responses. Table 4-27 shows the correlations among hyperlinks, multimedia, reader comments and j-bloggers' responses using Pearson's correlation analysis. It was found that the number of reader comments was positively related to the inclusion of onsite hyperlinks ( $r(756) = .111, p < .01$ ), videos ( $r(756) = .160, p < .001$ ) and pictures ( $r(756) = .152, p < .001$ ). Use of pictures was positively related with reader comments ( $r(756) = .152, p < .001$ ), j-bloggers' responses ( $r(756) = .094, p = .01$ ), onsite hyperlinks ( $r(756) = .203, p < .001$ ), and videos ( $r(756) = .218, p < .001$ ), which means that the more pictures in a j-blog post, the more onsite hyperlinks and videos in that j-blog post. Also,

those j-blog posts with a larger number of pictures had more reader comments and more j-bloggers' responses (Table 4-27).

Table 4-27. Correlations among hyperlinks, multimedia, reader comments and responses

		Reader comments	Journalist bloggers' responses	Onsite hyperlinks	Offsite hyperlinks	Videos	Audio	Pictures
Reader comments	Pearson Correlation	1	.462*	.111*	-.056	.160*	-.027	.152*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.002	.123	.000	.451	.000
	N		756	756	756	756	756	756
Journalist blogger reacts	Pearson Correlation		1	-.002	-.052	.071	-.019	.094*
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.953	.155	.052	.595	.010
	N			756	756	756	756	756
Onsite hyperlinks	Pearson Correlation			1	.001	.052	-.014	.203*
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.986	.150	.707	.000
	N				756	756	756	756
Offsite hyperlinks	Pearson Correlation				1	.011	.061	-.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.772	.092	.486
	N					756	756	756
Videos	Pearson Correlation					1	-.005	.218*
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.888	.000
	N						756	756
Audio	Pearson Correlation						1	-.018
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.617
	N							756
Pictures	Pearson Correlation							1
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	N							

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Also, the study found that 27 j-bloggers in 45 (60%) did not use onsite hyperlinks. Five j-bloggers (11%) were responsible for 84% of onsite hyperlinks. Twenty-eight j-bloggers (62%) did not have offsite hyperlinks in their blog posts. Four j-bloggers (9%) were responsible for 60% of offsite hyperlinks. Eighteen j-bloggers (40%) had no pictures at all. And another 18 j-bloggers (40%) were responsible for 88.6% of pictures. Only three bloggers used videos, and only two bloggers used audio.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Blogging is a new genre of journalism that emphasizes personalization, reader participation and story formats that are fragmented and interdependent with other websites (Wall, 2005).

When journalists blog, the notions of new media and traditional newspapers combine and evolve, which would further bring changes to journalism and affect how people understand the reality and truth of our society and ourselves (Robinson, 2006).

The goal of this study was to gain insight into the development of j-blogs on newspaper websites in China, analyzing their topics, formats, hyperlink and multimedia usage, as well as the practice of interactivity. Based on the research questions, content analysis was employed to examine the general performance of j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China and how the two-way communication between journalists and readers in China is broadened by j-blogs. Specifically, the research focused on two factors, geographic location of newspapers hosting j-blogs and gender of j-bloggers, to determine how they influences the characteristics of Chinese j-blogs.

### **Topic and Format of Chinese Journalists' Blogs**

This study revealed that the most frequently addressed topic in Chinese j-blog posts was lifestyle (42.5%), within which education, health, family/parenting, pop culture, leisure life and human interests were covered with a high frequency. In fact, many j-bloggers in China were interested in talking about their private lives and their families, which had nothing to do with their work as journalists. For example, many j-bloggers were brand-new mothers who used their j-blogs to record their babies' growth. Politics/government/military was the second most highly ranked (18.4%) topic of j-blog posts in China. Business/economic activity (10.3%) and

crime/disasters (10.2%) were frequently written about in j-blogs in China as well. However, science/technology and celebrity/entertainment were the least common topics.

The study also found that the most often used formats in Chinese j-blog posts were the straight opinion column (29.9%), the rumor-mill blog (25.3%) and the reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals (16%). Compared with the seven categories of j-blogs' formats in the U.S. (Robinson, 2006), more Chinese j-bloggers preferred to cite articles (8.1%) and write poetry (5.3%). About 7.5% of j-blog posts in China were formatted as news summaries. Interestingly, some Chinese j-bloggers only summarized news from their newspapers or posted news stories they wrote.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of format, it seems that Chinese j-bloggers put more emphasis on conveying their own opinion and talking about their own lives, with less intention to actively engage readers in their j-blogs, because j-blog posts in the question-and-answer and readership forum formats were less common. However, there were some j-bloggers inviting readers for group activities, like climbing mountains or attending lectures, in their j-blogs.

The study found that, for politics/government/military, business/economic and crime/accidents/disasters issues, Chinese j-bloggers preferred to express their own opinions rather than citing facts or ideas from others, because 48.8% of j-blog posts about politics/government/military, 50.7% of j-blog posts about business/economic activities, and 39.1% of j-blog posts about crime/accidents/disasters took the format of a straight column of opinion. Journalists expressed original opinions on their j-blogs, providing their own thinking on some political and social subjects. It was observed that they were not supportive of the government or the authority all the time. In fact, many j-blog posts studied were quite critical on some governmental issues.

It was revealed that half of the lifestyle j-blog posts, which accounted for a big portion (42.5%) of j-blog posts in China, were rumor-mill blogs maintained as collections of rumors or records of the reporters' own life that did not necessarily relate to the news and may not even have any focus. For the format that simply provided copies of articles, the highest percent (25%) was in the topic of science/technology. The reason lies in the fact that science/technology is the kind of information that needs very specific knowledge to report. Citing articles, especially from famous sources, will be an easier and more convenient way for j-bloggers to bring important news of science and technology to readers.

The study found that geographic region and gender both exerted influences on topic and format of j-blog posts in China.

Previous studies have demonstrated the influence of China's geographic regions on economic status, distribution of newspapers and newspaper websites, as well as the adoption of the Internet and other new technology (He, & Zhu, 2002; Fram, Lu, & McHardy, 2004; Liu & Li, 2006). When collecting j-blogs for the study population, the researcher found that the number of j-blogs in East China far exceeded the number of those in the West and the Middle, which was consistent with previous research on newspaper and newspaper website distributions in China (He, & Zhu, 2002).

The study found that, although the most common topics in all of three regions in China were the same — lifestyle and politics, some topics were more popular in a region than in the other two regions. It was revealed that j-blog posts about lifestyle and crime/accidents/disasters were more popular in East China; j-blog posts covering politics and economics were more popular in the West. This phenomenon could be explained by the different degrees of economic development in the three regions. East China is the part of the country where economics is highly

developed. It has the most large global cities, like Beijing and Shanghai, and is the frontier of China's opening to the world (China Knowledge, 2007; Keidel, 2007). Because people in the East have been more affluent than those in the Middle and the West, journalists in the East covered more stories about lifestyle and crime to cater to people's need to enjoy a good life. Middle and West China are relatively poor parts of the country. The fact that journalists in these two regions talked more about politics, economics and science implied that people there were more attentive to opportunities to improve their economic status.

Regarding the formats, the most frequently used format in East China was rumor-mill blog (33.3%); the most often used format of j-blogs in Middle and West China was straight opinion column, followed by rumor-mill blog and news notebook format. It was also found that j-bloggers in the East used more readership forums and citations of articles, compared with the Middle and the West. Generally, journalists in East China have adopted the Internet for a longer time and to a greater extent. They seem more likely to collect information and cite news stories online. As experience with the Internet has grown, journalists in the East have been able to develop the j-blogs for two-way communication with readers. In contrast, j-bloggers in the Middle were more likely to summarize news (13.8%) and write poetry (9.9%) in their j-blogs; and the straight opinion column was the most frequently used format in Middle (26.9%) and West China (37%). The cultural factors weigh in on this issue. Because the central and western part of China are less open to the world, journalists there have been holding more tightly with traditional values and established news principles. They strictly referred to traditional rules of news writing and journalistic formats even in their j-blogs. To them, the differences between j-blogs and newspapers seem still not that big.

The influence of gender on traditional journalism and new media, as well as the gender differences in Internet use and blogging in China have been well documented (CNNIC, July 2007; Lu, 2006). Consistent with previous research on the digital gender gap in the U.S. (Morahan-Martin, 1998; Harp & Tremayne, 2006; Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004), the researcher found that most j-blogs on Chinese newspaper websites were maintained by males. There were more male j-bloggers (70.5%) than female j-bloggers (27.4%) in China in this sample, which was consistent with the fact that male journalists were still the majority in news rooms, accounting for more than 60% of the journalist population in China (Lu, 2006).

The data show that the gender of j-bloggers affected the topic and format. Male j-bloggers in China were more likely to cover politics/government/military and science/technology. Female j-bloggers were more likely to talk about lifestyle. These findings demonstrated that male and female j-bloggers in China have been conforming to the social roles set in gender theory when practicing journalism.

Gender theory suggested that the behaviors of women in their real life are greatly influenced by expected gender roles, which hold that males are supposed to be more concerned with the political realm and external events, while females are largely limited within home, family and domestic affairs (Donovan, 1994; Harp & Tremayne, 2006). In the era of the Internet, real-life gender dynamics are reproduced online (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004). China is a very traditional society, within which people retain most of these presumptions for gender roles even in journalistic practices such as j-blogging.

For the format of posts, male j-bloggers were revealed to be more likely to use straight opinion columns (34.7%) while female j-bloggers were more likely to run rumor-mill blogs (40.1%). These findings were quite similar to the results of blog research in the U.S. and Europe,

which has shown that men tended to have a more authoritative manner in their conversation style and write opinion-focused blogs, while women were more interested in gossip and communication of feelings or thoughts (Herring, & Paolillo, 2006; Pedersen, & Macafee, 2007; Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmohl, & Sapp, 2006).

### **Interactivity and Gatekeeping in Journalists' Blogs in China**

Interactivity is an important aspect of the Internet. Studies have revealed that Internet users' satisfaction with navigation and usability increased when a website offered a greater level of involvement (Kamali & Loker, 2002). Regarding interactivity, blogs have been said to offer interactivity at a higher rate than normal Web pages through the higher frequency of hyperlinks and feedback features (Trammell, 2004). While hyperlinks in the j-blogs can be considered as user-to-system interactivity, reader comments and j-blogger responses can be taken as user-to-user interactivity, or more exactly, two-way communication between readers and journalists. Interactivity in j-blogs has been marked by the degree to which users control content, have the opportunity to contribute to a blog, and transcend passive exposure (Peng, Tham, & Xiaoming, 1999). For j-bloggers, it is necessary to consider options for the public to respond, interact or even customize certain stories (Deuze, 2003).

To study the interactivity between readers and j-bloggers, reader comment and response from j-bloggers were the main variables examined here. Most j-blogs on newspaper websites in China, at least all of the j-blog posts in this study, allowed comments, which can be understood as a signal from traditional Chinese newspapers to welcome open communication with readers, although whether these reader comments were moderated is not clear.

There were many j-blog posts (37.4%) that had no comments. Nevertheless, because a great many (62.6%) posts had one or more comments, it appears that j-blog readers in China have started to comment and let j-bloggers know their views about issues covered.

The study found that reader comment in Chinese j-blog posts differed significantly across topics, formats, geographic regions and genders. Partly due to the fact that there were more Internet users in the East and the Internet adoption rate was higher in the East than in the Middle, j-blog readers in the East commented most frequently, with the highest mean number of reader comments, while people in the Middle commented least frequently.

Female j-bloggers won over male j-bloggers in the frequency and mean number of reader comments, which was consistent with previous studies claiming that women had stronger social interaction motivations online (Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmohl, & Sapp, 2006). However, it could also be an artifact of topic or format (Herring & Paolillo, 2006), because female j-bloggers were more likely to talk about certain topics and use certain formats, and these topics or formats were the ones that most likely to have reader comments.

It was found that 66.2% of j-blog posts about crime/accidents/disasters, 64.7% of celebrity/entertainment, and 62% of lifestyle and business/economic activity had comments. However, only 48.4% of the science/technology posts got comments. J-blog posts with higher mean numbers of reader comments were about celebrity/entertainment, lifestyle and crime/accident/disasters. This can be understood to mean that readers were more interested and more concerned about topics of crime, celebrity and lifestyle. They had more opinions and feedback on these topics. On the other hand, science and technology was not so popular among readers and also not that easy for people to talk about because it requires specific knowledge and deep understanding on the subject.

The study found that nearly 79% of the confessional diary blog, 73% of the readership columns, 69% of the rumor-mill blogs and 67% of the question-and answer format had one or more reader comments. The most comments, 59, appeared in a blog post with the format of a

readership forum, in which the j-blogger invited her readers to climb mountains together for the weekend. Surprisingly, j-blog posts in the format of confessional diary were the highest in frequency of comments. Because these confessional diaries written by j-bloggers were always about their opinions for their news beats or feelings and experiences of covering some news stories, it implied that Chinese readers were quite interested in knowing stories behind news.

J-blog posts with a higher mean number of comments included the formats of question-and-answer and readership forum, which were also high in the frequency of reader comments. In other words, adopting the question-and-answer and readership forum formats is quite helpful to encourage readers to comment and communicate with j-bloggers. But, as mentioned before, these two formats were the least used in Chinese j-blogs. Therefore, if Chinese j-bloggers want to engage readers in j-blogs and know more about what readers are thinking about, they should adjust their minds and make good use of formats such as readership forum in the future.

The analysis of the j-bloggers' responses showed that j-bloggers in China have started to communicate with readers and cared about what they say and feel. The data showed that 26% of j-blog posts with one or more reader comments had j-bloggers' responses. However, there were 74% of j-blog posts with at least one reader comment and no response from j-bloggers, and only 9.9% of j-blog posts with one or more reader comments had more than one response, which suggested that still a great many j-bloggers in China have been missing out on opening up a dialogue with readers. As a matter of fact, the study found that seven j-bloggers in 45 (16%) were responsible for 71.8% of the responses and the remaining 38 j-bloggers were not very responsive. Among the 45 j-bloggers in this study, 12 j-bloggers (27%) did not respond to any comments, indicating that the response rate differs significantly depending upon the individual j-bloggers, and the personal preferences or habits of j-bloggers are important. Some j-bloggers

may intend to communicate more with readers or are more familiar or comfortable with the way to communicate with readers through j-blogs. In addition, the researcher found, in some cases, that those who frequently left comments in a j-blog were the co-workers of the j-blogger. In other words, reader comments are not only left by readers but also by other journalists. Accordingly, the development of interactivity among readers and journalists online, as well as journalists and readers' desire to participate in online journalism in China, may still lie in the early stage.

It was also revealed that j-blog posts with more reader comments were more likely to have more j-bloggers' responses. A blog post that inspired many comments might make the j-blogger feel it was important to respond. It is evident that some j-bloggers in China have begun to deploy a strategy of interactive dialogue with readers. By adopting j-blogs on their websites, traditional newspapers in China went beyond providing news and opinion to promote interactivity, in which the role of gatekeeper is shared by both journalists and readers.

Gatekeeping theory proposes that journalists are the ones who select and deliver information that flows over the communication channel, shaping what should be finally presented, hence implicitly defining the limits of discourse on public issues (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001; White, 1950; Reese & Ballinger, 2001). In this way, the gate swings only one way from the journalists outward. Only information available to the journalist is allowed out to audiences based on the decisions of journalists (Watson, 2003). However, the existence of reader comments in Chinese j-blogs makes it possible for readers to join the game and publish information on newspaper websites (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). As a matter of fact, 62.6% of all posts studied had one or more reader comments. Obviously, getting rid of the traditional role as passive audience, readers in China intend to further participate in news

productions through ways such as commenting on j-blog posts, which helps their voices to be heard and their opinions to be noticed by journalists. By blogging and responding to readers, journalists are able to provide more news and opinions to readers. As a result, Chinese j-blogs make the gate swing both ways so that information and opinion flow from the journalists to their readers as well as from readers back to the journalists, creating a more open environment.

In fact, it was observed that there were different kinds of comments in Chinese j-blogs, which can be generally categorized into five types: 1) views toward the content of the j-blog post; 2) adding information to the j-blog post; 3) responses to other readers who had left comments; 4) providing news tips to journalists or responding to content from the newspaper that the j-blogger works for; 5) off-topic content, like advertisements.

The study found that j-bloggers' responses differed greatly according to format or gender. J-blog posts as readership forums had the highest mean number of responses compared with other formats. Again, it means that formats such as a readership forum are a good choice to open the doors for two-way communication, and the use of such format should be highly encouraged among Chinese j-bloggers. Female j-bloggers were found to respond more frequently to readers. Although the study also found that six of seven j-bloggers that most frequently responded to readers were male, which seems contrary to the previous finding, the format may have been a greater factor on this issue. No j-blog posts by females used the question-and-answer format, but 1.1% of posts by males in this study did, and these six j-bloggers of the seven were revealed to be mainly responsible for using this format. When male j-bloggers chose to use the question-and-answer format, they were deliberately responding to readers. It was often the case that female j-bloggers in China made friends with readers, caring about their happiness and chatting about daily life with readers through comments and responses. Other researchers have also found that

women were more likely to use blogs as a communication tool for social interactions (Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006).

### **Hyperlinks and Multimedia in Chinese Journalists' Blogs**

J-bloggers as well as many other online journalists have to decide which media formats, for example videos, audio or pictures, can best offer information, which is the ideal way to connect a story to other archives and resources (Deuze, 2003). Research about the role of hyperlinks and multimedia in blogs has shown that application of hyperlinks and multimedia in blogs is not only an issue of technology and skills but also an issue of understanding and developing a different, diverging journalistic news culture (Deuze, 2003).

Chinese j-blogs demonstrated low use of hyperlinks and multimedia: 89.7% of j-blog posts had no onsite hyperlinks; 89.8% of j-blog posts included zero offsite hyperlinks; 79.4% of j-blog posts did not have pictures. There were very few j-blog posts containing video and audio; and no audio and photo slideshows were found in Chinese j-blogs. All these facts revealed that the application of hyperlinks and multimedia is quite limited in j-blogs in China now, which may result from Chinese j-bloggers' limited understandings of technologies related with the Internet and blogs.

The most frequently used feature was photographs. Hyperlinks in Chinese j-blogs are mainly used as a means to familiarize readers with background information and promote the j-blogger's own stance on issues discussed. Onsite hyperlinks ( $M = .29$ ) were more frequently used than offsite hyperlinks ( $M = .20$ ), indicating that Chinese j-bloggers relied more on their own newspapers for linked materials. Interestingly, a majority of offsite hyperlinks were directed to those well-known newspaper or news agency websites in China such as People's Daily ([www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)) and Xinhua News Agency ([www.xinhuanet.com](http://www.xinhuanet.com)), or the main news Web portals, like Sina ([news.sina.com.cn](http://news.sina.com.cn)) and 163 ([news.163.com](http://news.163.com)), which perhaps are the main

online news resources and most often visited websites by journalists in China. Most hyperlinks in Chinese j-blogs were to texts rather than multimedia such as video and audio, which again implied that multimedia remains an untapped resource for j-blogs in China.

The study showed that the number of offsite hyperlinks differed by topic. J-blogs about politics/government/military and crime/accidents/disasters had the highest mean number of offsite hyperlinks, while lifestyle and celebrity/entertainment posts had the lowest means. The reason may lie in the facts that 1) on the serious issues like politics, j-bloggers wanted readers to look at the original source; 2) when covering hard news like politics and crime, j-bloggers had to look up offsite hyperlinks for comprehensive information. In contrast, for the soft news like lifestyle and entertainment, offsite hyperlinks were not that necessary and important.

Geographic region was revealed to have a significant effect on use of offsite hyperlinks and use of pictures. The highest mean number of offsite hyperlinks was in the East and the lowest in the Middle, consistent with the results of previous research showing that the highest rates of new technology adoption and Internet usage were in the East (Keidel, 2007).

Surprisingly, the study found that j-blog posts from the West were the highest in mean number of pictures. Re-examining the population of the study, it was found that three j-bloggers in 15 from the West were photojournalists, who were more likely to post pictures, while only one j-blogger from the Middle and none from the East were photojournalists.

Gender also had a significant effect on use of onsite hyperlinks. Female j-bloggers on used more onsite hyperlinks average than male j-bloggers.

Format was revealed to have a significant effect on use of onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks and pictures. J-blog posts in the format of news summaries had the highest mean number of onsite hyperlinks due to the fact that, when summarizing news, j-bloggers often used

onsite hyperlinks to link to the complete story. The format of straight opinion column had the highest mean number of offsite hyperlinks, which were used to provide background information and help readers to understand j-bloggers' opinions; this format had the lowest mean number of pictures.

Another interesting finding was that when filtering out all the j-blog posts with zero onsite hyperlinks, offsite hyperlinks, videos, audio, or pictures to analyze the influence of topic, format, geographic region and gender on hyperlinks and multimedia, it was found that format and gender no longer had any significant influence on hyperlinks and multimedia, although the use of offsite hyperlinks still differed significantly between topics and regions in the same way, and use of pictures still differed significantly between regions in the same way, compared with the results without filtering.

The examination of the interrelationships among frequency of hyperlinks, multimedia, reader comments and j-bloggers' responses revealed that use of pictures is positively related with use of onsite hyperlinks, videos, reader comments, and j-bloggers' responses, which means that the more pictures in a j-blog post, the more onsite hyperlinks and videos. Those j-bloggers who posted more pictures in their j-blogs were more likely to use hyperlinks and other advanced multimedia technology, like video.

In addition, the study found that reader comments were positively related with j-bloggers' responses, onsite hyperlinks, videos and pictures. The more pictures, onsite hyperlinks and videos j-blog posts had, the more reader comments in that j-blog post. There is an implication that adding hyperlinks and multimedia features such as photos and videos in j-blogs can encourage readers to comment.

What's more, the study found that the number of j-blogger responses was positively related with use of pictures in the j-blog posts. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the more j-bloggers engaged in multimedia use, the more attention they paid to their j-blogs, and the more they would like to communicate with readers. J-bloggers' responding is an obvious way to enhance communication.

Regarding hyperlinks and multimedia, the study found that 27 j-bloggers (60%) did not use any onsite hyperlinks. Twenty eight j-bloggers (62%) did not have any offsite hyperlinks in their blog posts. Twenty j-bloggers (44.4%) used neither onsite hyperlinks nor offsite hyperlinks. Eighteen j-bloggers (40%) used no pictures at all. Five j-bloggers (11%) were responsible for 84% of onsite hyperlinks. Four j-bloggers (9%) were responsible for 60% of offsite hyperlinks. Eighteen j-bloggers (40%) were responsible for 88.6% of pictures. This suggests that the use of hyperlinks and multimedia depended heavily upon individual j-bloggers. If a j-blogger understands blogging, perhaps he or she is more likely to use more pictures, hyperlinks and multimedia. Chinese j-bloggers' preferences and habits of using hyperlinks and multimedia, as well as their familiarity with the technology, might influence how they manage their blogs overall. For example, if they understand blogging better, they may use certain formats such as question-and answer and readership forum, more frequently, and include more videos and audio to make their j-blogs more interesting.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

### **Limitations and Future Research**

First, because there was neither a complete directory of j-blogs on Chinese newspaper websites nor an authoritative list of newspapers in China that was publicly available, although the researcher tried every possible way to collect j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China and compile them together into a complete list, the population of this study still cannot be demonstrated to be comprehensive and inclusive.

Second, because the sample for this study was the j-blog posts on newspaper websites in China and not on non-newspaper websites, it is likely that these j-bloggers have some constraints such as professional reputation, business evaluation, and editorial supervision. This may directly influence the performance of journalists on blogging. Many Chinese journalists have maintained blogs on large blog portals such as Hexun ([blog.hexun.com](http://blog.hexun.com)) and Sina ([blog.sina.com.cn](http://blog.sina.com.cn)), where their identity as journalists and the newspapers they work for are not recognized. If all those j-blogs could be included into the sample, the study would be more comprehensive.

For future research, from the perspective of j-bloggers, their motivation for maintaining j-blogs, the pressure and barriers faced in the practice, their attitudes toward technology like multimedia, can be studied through interviews. Those j-blogs with great popularity can be studied to reveal the basic features of a successful j-blogs. From the perspective of readers, who these readers are and their characteristics, their motivations for reading and commenting on posts, their attitudes toward j-blog credibility and their perceptions of j-blog content, are also in need of analysis. From the perspective of interactivity, continued research on the content of reader comments, whether journalists are influenced by reader comments and how, whether readers are affected by j-blogs and how, can bring in deeper understanding about two-way communication

and gatekeeping in j-blogs. From the perspective of multimedia, it will be interesting to study the type of pictures, hyperlinks, video and audio that j-blogs use; how j-bloggers differ in using multimedia; why the influence of format and gender on multimedia and hyperlinks differed when filtered. Further research examining correlations among hyperlinks, multimedia use and reader comments can also help us to know more about j-blogs.

### **Conclusion and Final Thoughts**

Overall, this study of j-blogs on newspaper websites in China was a small attempt to review the development of these blogs, examining their basic characteristics and analyzing the influence of geographic region and gender on j-blogs. Theoretically, this study proposed to reconceptualize gatekeeping theory in j-blogs in China and apply gender theory on Chinese j-blogs. It was found that the topic and format of j-blogs differed by geographic regions and genders. Significant main effects with topic, format, region and gender were found on reader comments. Gender and format were revealed to influence j-bloggers' responses. Correlations between reader comments and j-bloggers' responses, onsite hyperlinks, videos and pictures, as well as correlations between pictures and onsite hyperlinks, videos, reader comments, and j-bloggers' responses, were revealed.

The Internet has posed big challenges to the traditional journalism in China. At the same time, it offers journalists more opportunities for new journalistic practices such as j-blogs. It seems that journalists in China have been adapting themselves to the new media environment and building the authority of traditional news organizations online. They have become j-bloggers, covering issues like lifestyle, politics/government/military, business/economic activity and crime/accidents/disasters, using the formats of rumor-mill blogs, straight column of journalist's opinion, and reporter's news notebook frequently. The format of j-blog posts varied by topics.

Also, j-bloggers have started to use hyperlinks and pictures to convey stories, yet are still in the infancy stage of video and audio applications.

Realizing that the mechanism of the Internet technically gives equal rights of speech to users, and that journalists can no longer be the ones to control the news decisions, Chinese j-bloggers are gradually adapting their traditional role of gatekeepers to sense-makers who support the value of information they distribute and are concerned with reader opinion. Thanks to the participatory nature of the Internet and the increasing amount of information available online, readers are able to make their own decisions on news and let journalists know what they think and what they want directly. By commenting on j-blog posts and using hyperlinks in their comments, readers open the gate of news decisions and allow the information to flow both ways, not only from journalists to readers but also from readers back to journalists. A new relationship with more interactivity between journalists and a democratized public is coming into being in China.

Geographic region proved to be influential on Chinese j-blogs. Economic and cultural differences among the East, Middle and West China affected the topics and formats seen in j-blogs. Newspapers in East China had overwhelming advantages over other regions in the development of j-blogs, in both quantity and quality. J-bloggers in East China were more active in using hyperlinks and interacting with readers.

Differences between male and female j-bloggers were found as well. Generally, there were more male j-bloggers in China. Male and female j-bloggers differed in choosing topics and formats for blogs. However, female j-bloggers seemed to be more active in communicating with readers.

The landscape of journalism in China is changing. At this time, j-blogs are a practice of traditional Chinese newspapers with new media and online journalism. J-blogs in China may assume the role of educating both journalists and readers for a more open atmosphere of public discourse, encouraging more communication and interactivity. It is still too early to say whether the development of j-blogs on newspaper websites in China is a fad or a trend that will develop into an important part of media. However, j-blogs have been bringing fresh air to the traditional Chinese newspapers and will exert some influence on the changing journalism landscape in China.

APPENDIX A  
CONTENT ANALYSIS CODEBOOK

Coder name (Coders to write down their name)

Coding date (Coders to write down the date that the coding is taking place)

ID (Coders to write down the identification number assigned to the j-blog post for content analysis)

Variable list:

1. Newspaper affiliation
2. URL of j-blog post
3. Name or online ID of the j-blogger
4. Gender of j-blogger
5. Geographic region of the newspaper hosting the j-blog
6. Topic of each j-blog post
7. Number of comments from readers in each j-blog post
8. Number of responses from the j-blogger for each j-blog post
9. Number of onsite hyperlinks in each j-blog post
10. Number of offsite hyperlinks in each j-blog post
11. Number of video included in each j-blog post
12. Number of audio included in each j-blog post
13. Number of pictures included in each j-blog post
14. Format of j-blog post

Variable definitions:

1. Newspaper affiliation

This variable records the host of the j-blog, the name of the newspaper that the j-blog is affiliated with.

1 = City Express (Dushikuaibao)

2 = Zhejiang Daily (Zhejiangribao)

3 = Liaoshen Evening News (Liaoshenwanbao)

4 = Xinwen Morning News (Xinwenchenbao)

5 = Xinwen Evening News (Xinwenwanbao)

6 = Qilu Evening News (Qiluwanbao)

7 = Xinmin Evening News (Xinmingwanbao)

8 = Southern Weekend (Nanfangzhoumo)

9 = Yangzhou Evening News (Yangzhouwanbao)

10 = Huasheng News (Huashengbao)

11 = New Culture (Xinwenhuabao)

12 = Hubei Daily (Hubeiribao)

13 = Dahe News (Dahebao)

14 = Nanyang Daily (Nanyangribao)

15 = Wuhu Daily (Wuhuribao)

16 = Chongqing Evening News (Chongqingwanbao)

17 = Ningxia Evening News (Ningxiawanbao)

18 = Ningxia Daily (Ningxiaribao)

19 = Modern Life (Xiandaishenghuobao)

20 = Chongqing Morning News (Chongqingzaobao)

21 = Chongqing Daily (Chongqingribao)

22 = Henan Business News (Henanshangbao)

## 2. URL (Uniform Resource Locator) of j-blog

This variable records the address of each j-blog post online.

## 3. Name or online ID of the j-blogger

This variable is the name or the online ID of the j-blogger shown in the j-blog profile.

## 4. Gender of the j-blogger

This variable is the gender of the j-blogger identified in the j-blog profile.

1 = Male

2 = Female

0 = Unknown

## 5. Geographic region of the newspaper hosting the j-blog

This variable measures where the newspaper hosting the j-blog located. Coders will identify the location of the newspaper by its name, or in the introduction of newspaper on its website, or by the address provided on the newspaper website.

1 = East (including Provinces of Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan)

2 = Middle (including Provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Anhui and Jiangxi)

3 = West (including Provinces of Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang)

#### 6. Topic of each j-blog post

This variable measures what content the j-blog covers. This code will tell us the topic of each post in the j-blog. Based on Deutschmann's scheme (1989) and Plopper's category (1991) of newspaper content, the following category of possible topics of j-blog post was established:

1. Politics, government and military (including administration, government related activities, laws, war, and defense);
  2. Business/economic activity (including budgets, taxes, finance, money-related items, and features on businesses or utilities);
  3. Crime, accidents, disasters (including alleged crime incidents, accidents, disasters, court proceedings and decisions, and any investigations involving any of the items in this category);
  4. Science/technology (including development of science, medical research, and high technology);
  5. Celebrity/entertainment (including entertainment, celebrity events/figures, and celebrity scandals);
  6. Lifestyle (including education, religion, art/music, sports/health, travel, cooking/food, family/parenting, pop culture and human interest);
  7. Other (including all the other topics that do not fall into previous categories).
- 1 = Politics, government and military

2 = Business/economic activity

3 = Crime, accidents and disasters

4 = Science/technology

5 = Celebrity/entertainment

6 = Lifestyle

7 = Other

7. Number of comments from readers in each j-blog post

This variable measures whether readers respond to the post of the j-blog and the number of comments from readers. Because the ID of each post writer in the j-blogs is identifiable, it is reasonable to take posts from people with IDs different from the j-blogger as comments from readers. Coders will identify the comments from readers after each j-blog post and count them. There are some reasons that readers do not leave any comment at all. So, if coders cannot find any comment from readers on the j-blog but there is a place for readers to comment, coders will take that readers are reluctant to comment for the post and put 0. If coders can find no way to leave comments after j-blog post, coders will call or email the newspaper hosting the j-blog to find out whether comment is forbidden or there are other reasons for showing no comment on the j-blog. If comments from readers are forbidden, coders will put -1.

0 = Comments allowed but no comment from readers

-1 = Comments are not allowed

Actual number of comments from readers if there is any

8. Number of responses from the j-blogger for each j-blog post

This variable measures whether the j-blogger responds to readers' comments. Coders will find if there is any post from the j-blogger after reader comments behind each post, which react to readers' idea. If there is no reaction from the j-bloggers after readers' comments, then coders put 0. If there is any, coders will count them and write down the number.

9. Number of onsite hyperlinks in each j-blog post

This variable measures whether there are hyperlinks in each j-blog post that links to some content on the same newspaper website and the number of such hyperlinks included.

10. Number of offsite hyperlinks in each j-blog post

This variable measures whether the content hyperlinked in the j-blog post is on other websites instead of the newspaper website hosting the j-blog and count the number of such hyperlinks.

11. Number of video included in each j-blog post

This variable measures if there is any video clip included in the posts of the j-blogger and how many. Coders will count the total number of video embedded in the post of the j-blogger.

12. Number of audio included in each j-blog post

This variable measures if there is any audio included in each post of the j-blogger and how many. Coders will count the number of audio embedded in each j-blog post.

13. Number of pictures included in each j-blog post

Coders first find out whether there is any news photo, other photo or other image in the post of the j-blogger and count the number of pictures included in each post.

#### 14. Format of j-blog post

This variable measures what kind of format j-blogs assume. Based on Robinson's categorization (2006) of seven j-blog formats and a preliminary review of some j-blogs on newspaper websites in Mainland China, the format of j-blog can be categorized into nine types. The first seven types are from Robinson's literature. The last two are added by the researcher as categories appearing in the j-blogs in China.

1 = Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals (for example, some small news stories collected or read by the j-blogger)

2 = Straight column of opinion for the Web (for example, expression of personal opinion for some news or incidentals for the Web)

3 = Question-and-answer format by editors (for example, a list of collected answers for some questions previously received from readers)

4 = Readership forum (for example, a call for readers' suggestions or news clues to give people an opportunity to make their concerns known, a place for journalists and readers to communicate with each other)

5 = Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat (for example, an excerpt from the blog of Global's Mike Edgell "In my career so far, I have met people who have been victimized in every way possible I think. Sometimes they pop into my head months or even years later....I think of that woman who was chopped in pieces by her boyfriend and the interview I did with the killer before he was arrested and how many lives he affected. I think

about an immigrant family in ottawa that lost everything it had built in Canada in a fire with no insurance. There are so many.”)

6 = Round-up of news summaries that promote the print publication (for example, a summary of important last-season-news from the newspaper where the j-blogger works or a review of news stories written by the j-blogger for the past half year)

7 = Rumor-mill blog that the reporter uses as an off-the-record account (for example, release of rumors or some information not proved true that are not so appropriate for publication, like some speculation or conjecture by the j-blogger; or records of the reporter’s own life)

8 = Copy of articles from others with the source stated (for example, some journalists read some interesting stories and want to share it in the j-blog with readers. So they copy the article in the blog with the source stated instead of merely giving a hyperlink)

9 = Poetry (some poems or verses created and posted by the j-blogger)

APPENDIX B  
CODING SHEET

Coder name (circle one):

1 = Fangfang Gao

2 = Yan Lin

Coding date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 2008

ID of the j-blog post:

*Please read the entire j-blog post first and code the information below.*

1. Newspaper affiliation of j-blog (Circle one):

1 = City Express (Dushikuaibao)

2 = Zhejiang Daily (Zhejiangribao)

3 = Liaoshen Evening News (Liaoshenwanbao)

4 = Xinwen Morning News (Xinwenchenbao)

5 = Xinwen Evening News (Xinwenwanbao)

6 = Qilu Evening News (Qiluwanbao)

7 = Xinmin Evening News (Xinmingwanbao)

8 = Southern Weekend (Nanfangzhoumo)

9 = Yangzhou Evening News (Yangzhouwanbao)

10 = Huasheng News (Huashengbao)

11 = New Culture (Xinwenhuabao)

12 = Hubei Daily (Hubeiribao)

13 = Dahe News (Dahebao)

14 = Nanyang Daily (Nanyangribao)

15 = Wuhu Daily (Wuhuribao)

16 = Chongqing Evening News (Chongqingwanbao)

17 = Ningxia Evening News (Ningxiawanbao)

18 = Ningxia Daily (Ningxiaribao)

19 = Modern Life (Xiandaishenghuobao)

20 = Chongqing Morning News (Chongqingzaobao)

21 = Chongqing Daily (Chongqingribao)

22 = Henan Business News (Henanshangbao)

2. URL (Uniform Resource Locator) of j-blog post: \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Name or online ID of the j-blogger: \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Gender of the j-blogger (circle one):

1 = Male    2 = Female    0 = Unknown

5. Geographic region of the newspaper hosting the j-blog (circle one):

1 = East    2 = Middle    3 = West

6. Topic (circle one):

1 = Politics, government and military

2 = Business/economic activity

3 = Crime, accidents and disasters

4 = Science/technology

5 = Celebrity/entertainment

6 = Lifestyle

7 = Other

7. Number of comments from readers (If there is no comment, circle 0 or -1; if there is any comment, count the number and write it down): \_\_\_\_\_.

0 = Comments allowed but no comment from readers

-1 = Comments are not allowed

8. Number of j-blogger responses: \_\_\_\_\_.

9. Number of onsite hyperlinks: \_\_\_\_\_.

10. Number of offsite hyperlinks: \_\_\_\_\_.

11. Number of video included: \_\_\_\_\_.

12. Number of audio included: \_\_\_\_\_.

13. Number of pictures included: \_\_\_\_\_.

14. Format of the j-blog post (circle one):

1 = Reporter's notebook of news tidbits and incidentals

2 = Straight column of opinion for the Web

3 = Question-and-answer format by editors

4 = Readership forum

5 = Confessional diary written by the reporter about his or her beat

6 = Round-up of news summaries that promote the print publication

7 = Rumor-mill blog that the reporter uses as an off-the-record account

8 = Copy of articles from others with the source stated

9 = Poetry

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