Exploring the Demographic Profile of Female Homebased Textile Design Bloggers

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Background: Throughout history, women have taken part in industrial work from their own homes, particularly in the fields of textile design, clothing design, and manufacturing (Rasch, 2010). In modern times, there have been many technological advancements such as computer aided design (CAD) and print-on-demand (POD) that have been helping homebased women designers simplify their workload (Bowles & Isaac,2009; Ujiie, 2006). Many women feel that a home-based business (HBB) is a great opportunity since it is more flexible and allows a better balance between work demands and familial responsibilities. (Thompson, Jones-Evans, & Kwong, 2009). Since 1990, millions of blogs have been established that discuss their authors' personal lives, business operations, and motivations, with a majority being established by women (Chen, 2012).

Purpose: This study aims to partially fill the literature gap by exploring the demographic profile of female home-based textile-design bloggers, a unique segment of the female HBB world who has growing around the use of CAD and POD technology.

Significance: women are becoming entrepreneurs at a faster rate than men and there has been a corresponding interest in studying the demographic profile of women in the industry (Warnecke, 2013). Limited scholarly research has been done in terms of female HBB (Mould, Volery,& Liu, 2014). Therefore, this demographic profile of female textile designers bloggers study is significant within the industry and business world since thorough the lifestyle of current designers is aimed to encourage more people to become textile designers. Moreover, by understanding the demographic profile of this group of users which have not been explored or examined will make possible for more research in depth.

Method: A qualitative conventional content analysis was applied. This method has been used in many other analyses of blogs (Mora & Rocamora, 2015). A purposeful sampling method was used, and blogs to include in the sample group were identified by the sampling criteria, female textile designers, aged 19 or above, that design textiles from home using CAD and POD, sell their designs in an online marketplace, and maintain an active (2014-2016) English-language blog about textile design. These criteria define the sampling which will ensure a correct understanding of the study's phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Blogs were identified and collected by searching key words and phrases such as "textile-design blogger", "textile graphic design blogger", and "digital textile-design blogger" on websites such as Google, Google+, Blogspot

LiveJournal, and Tumblr. Online marketplaces and e-commerce sites such as Etsy and Spoonflower's Marketplace were also used as a resource for finding linked blogs.

Data Analyses: Blog content was analyzed using three rounds of coding and constant comparison (Dey,1993). The blog posts were analyzed by using Creswell's (2012) steps of analyzing qualitative data, which includes making general reflections on the overall meaning of the data, coding the data into meaningful segments that are labeled by the researcher, combining the coding segments into broader themes, and then making thoughtful comparisons between the data. The qualitative data analysis program MAXQDA 11 (VERBI GmbH, 2014) was used to analyze the data in the current study. Reliability for the current study was ensured via an intercoder agreement where two coders analyzed the blogs. A friend of the researcher that was introduced to the study; informally trained in content analysis and use of the MAXQDA software program was invited to code the same blogs independently, and the codes from both coders were compared to ensure reliability (Krippendorff, 2004). The inter-coder reliability of the current study is 89.57%. The validity in a qualitative research study can be reached in different strategies. One of the strategies is through peer review or debriefing, as it provides an external check of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the current study, the researcher received guidance from a research methodology expert and mixed methods consultant at the University of Nebraska's NEAR Center.

Finding: Analyzing of the 30 designers' blogs and 138 blog posts included the findings of their age, nationality and ethnic identity, current place of residence, family status, educational background, occupation, and socioeconomic status. The findings highlighted that designers were more open to discussing their parental status than their marital status, both under the category of family status. On the other hand, age and income were rarely shared openly. Analysis of blog content found that the designers publicized work information (n=27), the majority (n=23) only own and operate a home-based business, while a few (n=4) had a day job outside of the house in addition to their HBB. The findings show that designers mostly (n=7) have informal education in design as opposed to a college or university degree (n=4). Findings also demonstrate that the use of e-commerce and other tools such as CAD are indispensable to home-based textile designers.

Implications: The results showed that there are limited educational and economic barriers to entry in the textile design field, which may be used to promote and attract new designers. Furthermore, understanding the demographic profile of these people will help companies and other designers market products to them in an effective manner such as CAD software, POD services, digital products such as Photoshop Brushes, and informal educational experiences such as online classes and tutorials.

Limitation and recommendation: This research based on content from blogs, the designers may not report everything in detail, and may not share some demographic information that would be helpful. For a future study, there is still a large amount of research that can be done on topics such as informal education and the entrepreneurial aspect of textile design.

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