



Sidedness, commercial intent and expertise in blog advertising



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 February 2015
Received in revised form 1 December 2015
Accepted 1 March 2016
Available online 11 May 2016

Keywords:

Blogging
Advertising
Message sidedness
Communicator expertise
Advertising intent

ABSTRACT

Currently, the internet is the main product information source for many consumer goods, mainly because of the irruption of consumer reviews based on blogging. Messages placed on them are usually perceived as a reliable and independent source of information, compared to traditional advertising. Also, blogs are websites that have a high personal nature perception. Using a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design, this study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of blogging commercial messages, measuring the influence of the message sidedness, communicator expertise and advertising intent and tests their influence over advertising effectiveness (measured as credibility and behavioral intention). Results show the relevance of using two-sided messages, expert sources and unbiased (non-sponsored) messages in terms of increase blog credibility and behavioral intention toward the reviewed product. Interactions of the variables are also examined.

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1. Introduction

Blogs have attracted the attention of *internauts* all over the world and offer multiple possibilities to both people and organizations. They allow people and groups express opinions to a wide audience without large expense, and as a consequence, they are one of the fastest-growing platforms in the Internet 2.0 across the world (Yang, 2011; Zhu & Tan, 2007). Evidence from Latin America shows that blogging sites have gained considerable ground in this region. In fact, in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico the three largest blogging platforms in the region—*Blogger*, *Tumblr*, and *Wordpress*—are among the 10 most popular social sites in the online market of each country. Moreover, it has been observed that 8 out of 10 internet users in Latin America buy, whether online or offline, after consulting online either in a webpage or in a blog (comScore, 2013; Delgado, 2013; Google & D'Alessio IROL, 2011).

Public blogs are websites with some key features: they are personal in nature and serve as a channel for the author's experiences or opinions (Schau & Gilly, 2003). The messages in the blog's entries are usually understood to be the blogger's opinions and may have relevant persuasive power (Huang & Lin, 2009; Zhu & Tan, 2007). Blogs are therefore seen as a reliable and independent source of information, which is an important difference between this format and traditional advertising venues (Beniger, 1987; Chu & Kamal, 2008). In this context, marketing communication strategies frequently use blogs for product/service reviews,

performance evaluations, ad banners, sponsorships, or endorsements embedded in the blog text (Armstrong, 2006; Jarvis, 2006).

Blog advertising has been defined as the inclusion of persuasive information about products or services on blog posts or in banners embedded in the website (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Yang, 2011). Previous research on persuasive communications in blogs has mentioned a number of key factors associated with their effectiveness in terms of consumer attitude and behavior, such as the message content, the source of the communication (blogger), the audience, and the setting in which the communication action is developed (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Fu, Chen, & Chi, 2012; Huang & Lin, 2009; Zhu & Tan, 2007).

Simultaneously, two variables (source credibility and behavioral intention) have been mentioned among the most relevant aspects in terms of the actual persuasiveness of communication executions (Fu et al., 2012; Lim, 2006; Zhu & Tan, 2007). Regarding credibility, it is important to note that in the case of the internet its relevance is even higher because the digitalization process lowers the cost of information dissemination and increases accessibility to information (Metzger, 2005). Research on blog credibility has shown that readers' reliance on blogs is the key determinant of how much people cognitively use the information contained on this media platform to develop attitudes toward products, services, and other issues (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Gunter, Campbell, Touri, & Gibson, 2009; Kang, 2010; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Schweiger, 2000).

Behavioral intention represents another crucial element in the literature, including the field of consumer research, and describes whether or not the subject shows intent to perform some action. Behavioral intention has been proposed as a relevant antecedent of what people actually do (Ajzen, 1991), although in fact, meta-analyses of this variable have demonstrated up to 38% of variance in actual behaviors (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Sheeran & Orbell, 1998; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988).

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This paper seeks to expand the understanding of the effectiveness of blogging in the context of commercial messages by measuring the influence of some key elements of the message (*message sidedness*, *advertising intention*) and the source/author (*communicator expertise*) on two fundamental outputs: *source credibility* and *behavioral intention* of the audience or blog readers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Message sidedness

The first aspect to be examined in this study is message sidedness. Researchers on consumer marketing have long been interested in the effects of one- versus two-sided message appeals. This element refers to the presence or absence of a mention of negative attributes for a product. The sidedness of a message can be one-sided (the advertiser only highlights the positive aspects of a product) to influence consumer behavior toward a product without mentioning its disadvantages. A message can also be two-sided (the advertiser highlights both positive and negative aspects of a product) with the positive attributes related to determinant characteristics and the negatives linked to less relevant attributes (Hastak & Park, 1990; Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989; Winter & Krämer, 2012).

Based on different theoretical perspectives, it has been proposed that two-sided messages are higher in credibility and conative intention (Kamins, 1984; Kamins & Assael, 1987). Inoculation theory suggests that two-sided appeals are likely to be more effective because presenting negative information about a brand inhibits counter-argumentation (Compton, 2013). Attribution theory suggests that disclaimers used in a two-sided message enhance the credibility of the message and/or of the message endorser, and thus induce a more favorable attitude toward the product or brand (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Winter, Krämer, Rosner, & Neubaum, 2015).

Empirical research has provided vast evidence that messages that are two-sided tend to be more effective and persuasive than those that are one-sided (Smith & Hunt, 1978; Swinyard, 1981; Wilkie & Farris, 1975; Wilson, 1976). Furthermore, a two-sided message can increase the credibility of the information source as well as buying intent. These messages may also change negative attitudes and create favorable new attitudes, as have been suggested in several studies (Atkin & Block, 1983; Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Friedman, Termini, & Washington, 1976; Kamins et al., 1989). Other research has proposed that a two-sided focus is more effective only when the exposed attributes are negatively correlated (Pechmann, 1992).

In the specific field of this study, Huang and Lin (2009) evaluated resistance provoked by blog sponsorship and examined *message sidedness* as a factor that affects advertising effectiveness. Their study focused on the effect that one-sided or two-sided communication could have on attitudes toward sponsored web blogs. Their results showed that the inclusion of positive and negative information (two-sided) had a positive impact on the attitude toward the blog. However, positive-only (one-sided) messages provoked a negative evaluation of the blog. Thus they concluded that, in the context of blogs, including a two-sided focus in the message might increase the communication's effectiveness without the negative impact on behavior that occurs with explicit advertising intent. The inclusion of a two-sided message might also increase the source credibility, which has a positive effect on communication effectiveness (Winter et al., 2015).

Prior research suggests that the use of a two-sided approach may have a better effect than a one-sided message focus, reinforcing the source credibility and the conative intention (Huang & Lin, 2009; Winter et al., 2015). Thus the first set of research hypotheses can be established.

H1a. Source credibility will be higher with a two-sided message than with a one-sided message.

H1b. The effectiveness of blog advertising will be higher with a two-sided message than with a one-sided message.

2.2. Communicator expertise

The communicator's expertise has been considered a crucial element in attitude change, source credibility, and behavioral disposition since the early years of the communication studies (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1991). Communicator expertise refers to the audience's perception of a blogger's skills, competency, and knowledge of the subject of the blog (or other media platform). As a consequence, at least theoretically, the blogger is not only the blog's content contributor, but the endorser of the product he/she writes about as well (Homer & Kahle, 1990; Zhu & Tan, 2007). In the context of a person commenting on a product on a blog, a high-expertise blogger can be considered to be making an *expert endorsement* of the product, and a low-expertise blogger can be seen as making a *novice endorsement* of it (Frieden, 1984; Wang, 2006; Wilson & Sherrell, 1993).

In terms of the mechanism behind the persuasion process, Friedman and Friedman (1979) proposed that expert endorsers influence through the process of internalization. They suggest that expert endorsers persuade through credibility; the endorser is perceived to have credible information that may be used to solve the consumer's problem. Some studies have suggested that a high-expertise communicator can have a relevant persuasive effect on some kinds of products with higher financial, physical, technological, or performance risk (Biswas, Biswas, & Das, 2006).

In the field of blogging, research has provided support for the assumption that consumers tend to prefer products endorsed or referred by a blogger with expertise. In fact, Kiecker and Cowles (2002) conducted a study that evaluated the credibility of blog product reviews and detected that when the source of communication was a blogger with expertise, the message in the blog was more persuasive and credible.

Thus, an additional pair of research hypotheses can be proposed.

H2a. Source credibility will be higher with a high-expertise (expert) communicator than with a low-expertise (regular consumer) communicator.

H2b. The effectiveness of blog advertising will be higher with a high-expertise (expert) communicator than with a low-expertise (regular consumer) communicator.

2.3. Advertising intent

At least theoretically, source credibility and behavioral intention derived from blog information require that a blog reader perceives it as unbiased. Therefore, disclosing that a post is sponsored would violate this assumption and limit the persuasion process because a sponsored post typically has more positive information about the product or service and is motivated by some form of compensation that the blogger receives from the sponsor (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). Sponsored information may have a negative effect on persuasion in that any biased (read commercial) intent detected by the public tends to produce significant levels of skepticism and more critical attitudes toward the message (Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2011).

There are two types of blogs, public and corporate, defined by the blogger's primary activity (Technorati, 2011). Public blogs are those generated by independent authors with no formal association with any specific corporation, and corporate blogs are those maintained by companies to communicate with consumers.

In general terms, consumers perceive public blogs to be credible sources of information. The presence of both no further motivation and unbiased intention in terms of their product reviews are key factors to increasing content credibility (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). Although

public blogs by definition have no direct relationship with a particular corporation, it is now common practice for brands to look for authors who are well known in given a market to test their products and post reviews on their own blogs. In some cases, the bloggers are given the products to review or cash to buy and review them. Unlike traditional advertising, product reviews on blogs are published as content among other periodic entries, so they are not easy to differentiate from regular posts (the sponsor is not clearly identifiable and the advertising intention is non-explicit). Advertorial-labeled content can alert the audience to the existence of a sponsored post (Zhu & Tan, 2007).

Blog readers constantly evaluate the content of what they read for accuracy, credibility, and possible ulterior motive (Kelley, 1967; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013), and because it is logical to assume that advertisers want to sell their products, blog content perceived as advertising is regarded as suspicious. This finding suggests that when advertising intent is explicitly expressed on blog posts, readers are less likely to develop a relevant behavioral intention toward the advertised product. On the other hand, when a blog sponsorship or advertisement placing is not clearly stated, the advertising intention appears implicit (Zhu & Tan, 2007).

Advertising intention is therefore either implicit or explicit (i.e. an advertorial sign), and in the event that it is implicit, the persuasive intention is not revealed to the reader in an attempt to avoid skepticism or arousing their resistance to advertising (Kim, Pasadeos, & Barban, 2001). Therefore, another set of hypotheses is posited.

H3a. Source credibility will be higher with an implicit advertising intention than with an explicit advertising intention.

H3b. The effectiveness of blog advertising will be higher with an implicit advertising intention than with an explicit advertising intention.

Finally, it is necessary to propose four research questions related to the interaction between the independent variables of message sidedness, communicator expertise, advertising intention, and their effect on source credibility and behavioral intent.

RQ₁: What is the interaction between message sidedness and the expertise of the communicator in terms of source credibility and behavioral intention?

RQ₂: What is the interaction between message sidedness and the perception of advertising intent in terms of source credibility and behavioral intention?

RQ₃: What is the interaction between the expertise of the communicator and the perception of advertising intent in terms of source credibility and behavioral intention?

RQ₄: What is the interaction between message sidedness, expertise of the communicator, and the perception of advertising intent in terms of source credibility and behavioral intention?

3. Method

3.1. Design and sample

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ experimental factorial design was used to measure the effect of the independent variables and their possible interactions. This design allowed us to explore the influence of *message sidedness* (one-sided and two-sided), *source expertise* (high and low) and *perception of advertising intent* (explicit and implicit) on audience's perception of the *credibility of the communication source* and their own *behavioral intention* as dependent variables. This type of experimental design is recommended to enable the measurement of the possibility of interactions from the combined use of these three independent variables (Malhotra, 2008, p. 237).

A purposive sample of 295 undergraduate and postgraduate students from a large university in Santiago de Chile was selected for this

Table 1
Sample and treatments of the study.

		Implicit ad intent	Explicit ad intent	Total
One-sided	High	35	37	72
	Low	37	37	74
Two-sided	High	37	36	73
	Low	38	38	76
Total		147	148	295

study (see Table 1). They were randomly assigned to one of eight treatments and then asked to answer a survey about their attitudes toward blogs and blog use (Viégas, 2005; Zhu & Tan, 2007). The use of a sample of university students is justified because of the generalized use of blogs among people under 30 years old (Viégas, 2005) and because of their familiarity with internet use (Zhu & Tan, 2007).

3.2. Experimental blog development

To control the possible influence of using different designs, layouts, contents, and formats, the blogs created for the experiment used standardized templates. Information about the blogger with specific expertise related to the reviewed product was located on the right-hand side of the page. After a pretest with 15 students in which they evaluated four different products (computer, sunglasses, perfume, and bicycle) in terms of whether they would use a blog to get information before buying it (in a single item from 1 – never to 7 – always) and the involvement level of them (using a 5-item scale proposed by Zaichkowsky, 1985), an HP laptop computer was selected as the reviewed product. It is interesting that prior studies have also used computers because it is a frequent topic of blog reviews and typical example of high involvement (Park & Moon, 2003; Zhu & Tan, 2007).

The left side of the template was used for the blog entries. In each experimental stimulus the first and last posts were filler entries, and only the second post presented the advertising message (Zhu & Tan, 2007), which also helped prevent primacy or recency effects (Krosnick & Alwin, 1987).

3.3. Independent variables

Three independent variables were tested. First *message sidedness* was associated to the level of importance of some characteristic of laptops. A second pre-test was conducted in order to identify the importance level of laptop attributes (see Table 2). A small ten-person sample evaluated seven attributes with a Likert seven-point scale. To test the two-sided approach effect, negative information was related to two attributes of weaker importance to reduce the possible impact on buying intention. For the one-sided condition, only positive information was included (Lim, 2006).

The second independent variable was *communicator expertise*. This variable was operationalized by manipulating the blogger's profile, profession, language, terms, and references to demonstrate a high level of product knowledge. For the low-expertise communicator case, profile information and formal language use were removed. High and low expertise level blogs reviewed the same seven attributes (Zhu & Tan,

Table 2
Laptop attributes.

Attribute	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Processor	10	6.1	0.88
RAM memory	10	6.1	0.88
Hard disk	10	5.7	0.82
Design	10	5.4	0.52
Connectivity	10	5.4	0.84
Battery	10	3.6	0.70
Touchpad mouse	10	3.3	0.67

2007). Finally, this variable was measured through a semantic differential scale with five items and seven points (Homer & Kahle, 1990; Ohanian, 1990).

The third independent variable, *advertising intention*, was incorporated through the explicit inclusion of an advertorial label in the post title that made the blog's advertising intention clear (Kim et al., 2001). The first paragraph of the publication also showed the advertiser sponsorship. For the implicit level, this label was not included, so no advertiser sponsorship was informed. This factor was measured through six statements with a seven point Likert scale (Ellerbach, 2004; Fogg et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2001).

3.4. Dependent variables

Two dependent variables were under study, perception of source credibility and *behavioral intent*. Perception of source credibility refers to a message sender's positive characteristics that influence the receiver's acceptance of the message communicated. Source credibility has been found, in part, to determine the persuasiveness of a message (Choi & Rifon, 2002). This variable was defined as the audience's degree of trust in the communicator's ability to provide objective and unbiased information (Belch & Belch, 2004) and was measured using a semantic differential scale of six items and seven points (Choi & Rifon, 2002).

The second dependent variable under study was *behavioral intention*. It was defined as the consumer's desire a) to obtain more information about the product, b) to make a positive recommendation about the product or c) to buy a specific product. It was measured using a seven-point Likert scale (Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006; Choi & Rifon, 2002; Chu & Kamal, 2008; Homer & Kahle, 1990; Till & Busler, 2000).

3.5. Other procedures

All of the surveys and experimental blogs were pre-tested to check the manipulations for the eight treatments and also looking for other problems that could arise with the experiment. As a result of this pre-test some blog entries were shortened and technical slang use was softened. The data was processed with SPSS and examined for consistency and the existence of erroneous or outlier information (Grover & Vriens, 2006). For the scales, the reliability and validity were evaluated through Principal-Component analysis and Cronbach's Alpha. Mean difference tests were applied to check the manipulation effects for every independent variable. Finally a MANOVA test was executed to check the effect of the three independent variables on the two dependent variables and their interactions.

4. Results

4.1. Validity and reliability tests

The scales used were tested through a Principal-Component analysis with Varimax rotation, and following the procedure of Zhu and Tan (2007), yielded eleven factors. A loading factor of 0.6 or greater was observed on the intended factors for all the items. The resulting constructs have a Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7, indicating adequate reliability (see Table 3).

4.2. Manipulation checks

Each stimulus was created by manipulating the three independent variables (communicator expertise, advertising intent, and message sidedness). The results showed a significant difference between the means for the two levels in each variable (see Table 4).

Table 3
Reliability test results.

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude toward advertising	5	0.804
Attitude toward blogging	6	0.965
Communicator expertise	5	0.971
Advertising intent	6	0.966
Message sidedness	7	0.831
Product familiarity	2	0.847
Product involvement	13	0.979
Respondent expertise	5	0.969
Brand familiarity	2	0.898
Brand involvement	5	0.957
Source credibility	6	0.969
Behavioral intention	5	0.924

4.3. Hypothesis tests

A MANOVA test was conducted to test the settled hypothesis. The independent variables (message sidedness, communicator expertise, and advertising intention) were examined with the dependent variables (source credibility and behavioral intention) and four co-variables representing their possible interactions (Table 5).

Analyzing the effects related to message sidedness on source credibility (H1a) suggested that the respondents who read the blogs with one-sided messages assigned a lower a credibility level to the information source ($M = 3.86$ vs. 5.22 , $F = 178.346$, $p < .001$), and analyzing the effect of message sidedness on the behavioral intention (H1b) showed that respondents who were exposed to blogs with one-sided messages reported lower behavioral intention ($M = 3.56$ vs. 4.98 , $F = 140.113$, $p < .001$) in contrast to those who read the two-sided message blogs (see Table 6). Thus, there is support for the first set of research hypotheses related to the differential effect of two-sided message rather than a one-sided message on the two dependent variables.

The results of the second set of hypotheses supported the greater effect of communicator expertise on source credibility (H2a) in the case of subjects exposed to a high-expertise communicator blog ($M = 4.89$ vs. 4.19 , $F = 47.363$, $p < .001$). Also, examining the effect of communicator expertise on behavioral intention (H2b) confirmed that behavioral intention ($M = 4.46$ vs. 4.09 , $F = 9.064$, $p < .005$) was greater in respondents exposed to high-expertise communicator blogs (see Table 7).

Furthermore, analyzing for the third set of hypotheses that address the effect that the perception of advertising intention in the blog content had on the dependent variables, showed that explicit advertising intention tended to lower perceived source credibility ($M = 4.27$ vs. 4.81 , $F = 26.697$, $p < .001$). The results also support the assumption that behavioral intention is lower when advertising intent is explicit than it is when the content's advertising intention is implicit (H3b) ($M = 4.12$ vs. 4.42 , $F = 5.205$ $p < .005$) (see Table 8).

4.4. Research question examination

The research questions used in this study examined the interaction between the independent and dependent variables. Specifically, RQ₁

Table 4
Manipulation checks.

Independent variables	Treatment (levels)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	p-Value
Message sidedness	One-sided	146	5.0	0.70	3.11*	0.00**
	Two-sided	146	4.7	0.74		
Communicator expertise	High	145	5.3	0.66	19.85	0.00**
	Low	148	3.2	1.00		
Advertising intent	Explicit	146	5.6	0.94	20.19	0.00**
	Implicit	147	3.3	1.00		

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5
MANOVA results.

Source	Dependent variable	DoF	F	Sig.
Message sidedness (H1a and H1b)	Source credibility	1	178.346	.000**
	Behavioral intention	1	140.113	.000**
Communicator expertise (H2a and H2b)	Source credibility	1	47.363	.000**
	Behavioral intention	1	9.064	.003*
Advertising intention (H3a and H3b)	Source credibility	1	26.697	.000**
	Behavioral intention	1	5.205	.023*
Message sidedness * communicator expertise (RQ ₁)	Source credibility	1	12.075	.001**
	Behavioral intention	1	10.159	.002**
Message sidedness * advertising intention (RQ ₂)	Source credibility	1	29.191	.000**
	Behavioral intention	1	10.494	.001**
Communicator expertise * advertising intention (RQ ₃)	Source credibility	1	.274	.601
	Behavioral intention	1	13.976	.000**
Message sidedness * communicator Expertise * advertising intention (RQ ₄)	Source credibility	1	3.354	.068
	Behavioral intention	1	.319	.573

* p < 0.05.

** p < 0.01.

analyzed the interaction of message sidedness and communicator expertise with source credibility ($F = 12.075$ $p < .001$) and behavioral intention ($F = 10.159$ $p < .005$) in the context of implicit commercial messages. In both scenarios (implicit and explicit), high-credibility communicators performed better when a two-sided message was used, although credibility was higher in the case of a high-expertise communicator (see Table 9). In contexts where the advertising intention was explicit, a bilateral message had more credibility and effectiveness because the advertising intention had been disclosed through the use of. Also, when using bilateral messages, non-expert sources were generally as credible as expert sources.

In the case of interaction between communicator expertise and message sidedness in an implicit context, a high-expertise communicator and a two-sided message were more effective on behavioral intention. At the same time, for an explicit scenario the effect of a two-sided approach was higher for a high-expertise communicator condition, without being superior to the same combination in the implicit context. Also, in an explicit context, behavioral intention was always higher when a two-sided message was used, regardless of the communicator's level of expertise (see Table 10).

RQ₂ analyzed the particular case of the interaction between message sidedness and advertising intent on source credibility ($F = 29.191$ $p < .001$) and behavioral intention ($F = 10.494$ $p < .005$) in a context of low and high expertise. As Tables 11 and 12 show, an explicit or implicit two-sided message had higher source credibility in both a high and low expertise communicator scenario. The same effect was established for the behavioral intention. However, a two-sided message was almost equally credible and effective, whether explicit or not, when used by an expert source.

Finally, between communication expertise and advertising intention (RQ₃) only the case of the behavioral intention was supported ($F = 13.976$ $p < .001$). In this instance, a high-expertise communicator using a one-sided message was most effective. Using an explicit message, both types of communicators were less effective (see Table 13).

In the case of a two-sided message, a low-expertise communicator was more effective when the advertising intention of the blog was explicit. This effectiveness is reduced when the advertising intent remains

implicit. High-expertise communicators were less effective in this context even using a two-sided message.

In summary, two-sided messages can reduce the resistance produced by an explicit advertising intention and also from the perceived disarrangement between the expertise level and product involvement degree. An interesting result was the effectiveness of low-expertise communicators on behavioral intention. This finding was an unexpected outcome considering previous research.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the effects of message sidedness, communicator expertise, and the perception of advertising intent on source credibility and behavioral intention in the context of blog advertising. The case of message sidedness is particularly important because slight amount of research has been reported to date about this variable in the context of the internet advertising.

In this regard, this study provides evidence of the greater benefits of using of a two-sided message in terms of both source credibility and behavioral intention. This result corroborates the findings reported in prior literature in traditional advertising on the persuasive value of using messages that also include negative aspects of the product, presented in the commercial message (Atkin & Block, 1983; Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Friedman et al., 1976; Huang & Lin, 2009; Kamins et al., 1989; Lim, 2006; Pechmann, 1992; Smith & Hunt, 1978; Swinyard, 1981; Wilkie & Farris, 1975; R.D. Wilson, 1976). This evidence suggests that consumer's skepticism and tendency to disbelieve, as well as the blogger's explicit use of some kind of advertorial sign revealing the persuasive intent embedded in the blog content, affect consumer's attitudes, behaviors, and psychological barriers differently in one-sided messages than they do in two-sided messages (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Huang & Lin, 2009; Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005). From a practical viewpoint, this result challenges the marketers' common belief of not presenting negative aspects of their own products or services (Belch & Belch, 2004).

It is clear that the use of bilateral messages does not transform into better those weaker or inferior characteristics of a particular product.

Table 6
Message sidedness effect.

	One-sided	Two-sided
Source credibility	3.86 N: 146 SD: 1.21	5.22 N: 146 SD: 0.76
Behavioral intention	3.56 N: 146 SD: 1.15	4.98 N: 146 SD: 1.04

Table 7
Communicator expertise effect.

	High	Low
Source credibility	4.89 N: 145 SD: 1.08	4.19 N: 147 SD: 1.24
Behavioral intention	4.46 N: 145 SD: 1.16	4.09 N: 147 SD: 1.41

Table 8
Advertising intent effect.

	Explicit	Implicit
Source credibility	4.27 N: 145 SD: 1.38	4.81 N: 147 SD: .96
Behavioral intention	4.12 N: 145 SD: 1.39	4.42 N: 147 SD: 1.21

What it would be expected is an effect in terms of perceived blog credibility, besides a potential reduction in behavioral intent. In this case, the use of a two-sided message can collaborate in the expectations setting process, achieving more realistic or objective expectations about the real potential of the product. From the desire to build long-term relationships with consumers, the use of two-sided messages may contribute to the generation of a more credible communication strategy adjusted to the reality of the products, without further disappointments or the negative perception that information was deliberately withheld.

In terms of the communicator expertise, this study also supports the idea that the more expert the source is perceived to be, the higher his or her credibility and behavioral intention toward the product are (Homer & Kahle, 1990; Zhu & Tan, 2007). At least in the case of the technological products (as used in this research), it means that the blogger plays a crucial role in the success of the message transmission as has been observed by researchers who propose that high-expertise sources perform better for more rational and high-involvement products such as financial, technical, or industrial goods or services (Biswas et al., 2006).

The perception of advertising intent in the message also had a significant effect on the dependent variables examined in this study (meaning source credibility and behavioral intent toward the product). The explicit disclosure that the information was sponsored significantly reduced the message's desired effect on consumers, as has been postulated by several studies on advertising skepticism (Rozendaal et al., 2011). This finding is particularly relevant in the case of blogs, because they are by nature perceived to be *impartial* sources of information, and this evidence raises an important ethical concern because audiences develop a naive approach to the information presented in blogs (Zhu & Tan, 2007).

Considering the interactions between the variables, the study's results demonstrated that in the case of a communication that is explicit about its persuasive intent, a two-sided message is more credible than a one-sided one for both types of communicators. An explanation for this finding comes from Zhu and Tan (2007), whom proposed that in the context of high product involvement and explicit advertising intention, consumers tend to process the information rationally and form counter-arguments, and in the case of a low-expertise communicator, this effect amplifies the negative reaction toward the stimulus.

Table 9
Effects of message sidedness and communicator on source credibility.

Implicit	One-sided	Two-sided	
High	4.86 N: 35 SD: .73	5.50 N: 35 SD: .72	5.19
Low	3.95 N: 37 SD: .84 4.40	4.92 N: 38 SD: .84 5.20	4.44
Explicit	One-sided	Two-sided	
High	3.93 N: 37 SD: 1.21	5.28 N: 36 SD: .85	4.60
Low	2.76 N: 37 SD: .99 3.35	5.18 N: 35 SD: .44 5.23	3.94

Table 10
Effects of message sidedness and communicator expertise on behavioral intention.

Implicit	One-sided	Two-sided	
High	4.46 N: 35 SD: .74	5.18 N: 37 SD: .85	4.83
Low	3.34 N: 37 SD: 1.06 3.89	4.68 N: 38 SD: 1.27 4.93	4.02
Explicit	One-sided	Two-sided	
High	3.42 N: 37 SD: 1.12	4.78 N: 36 SD: 1.10	4.09
Low	3.06 N: 37 SD: 1.13 3.24	5.31 N: 35 SD: .71 5.04	4.16

Another interesting result comes from an explicit advertising environment and a high-expertise communicator with a two-sided message. There is evidence that supports the idea that these types of messages are more effective for both types of communicators. Message sidedness reduces the resistance produced by an explicit advertising intention and achieves better results. Also, a high-expertise communicator with a two-sided message has more source credibility, and consumers assign more value to an expert opinion.

Finally, this study shows that in terms of advertising effectiveness, a low-expertise communicator with a two-sided message has greater impact than a high-expertise communicator and the same kind of message. An explanation for this finding is that the resistance generated by an explicit advertising intention is reduced by the addition of negative arguments toward non-determinant attributes.

When one-sided messages are used, a high-expertise communicator will be more effective in explicit or implicit contexts. Using two-sided messages, low-expertise communicators are more effective when they are explicit about their motivation for advertising. On the other hand, a high-expertise communicator will be more effective if the advertising intention remains implicit. Furthermore, message sidedness can reduce resistance toward advertising and its counter-argumentation, and a two-sided focus can increase bloggers' credibility and be more effective.

5.1. Limitations and future research directions

This study has some limitations that bear mention. The paper exhibits evidence of short-term effects on two dependent variables, so there is the possibility of assessing the permanency of these effects for

Table 11
Effects of message sidedness and advertising intention on source credibility.

High-expertise	One-sided	Two-sided	
Explicit	3.93 N: 37 SD: 1.22	5.28 N: 36 SD: .85	4.60
Implicit	4.86 N: 35 SD: .73 4.38	5.50 N: 37 SD: .72 5.39	5.19
Low-expertise	One-sided	Two-sided	
Explicit	2.76 N: 37 SD: .99	5.18 N: 35 SD: .44	3.94
Implicit	3.95 N: 37 SD: .84 3.36	4.92 N: 38 SD: .84 5.04	4.44

Table 12
Effects of message sidedness and advertising intention on behavioral intention.

High-expertise	One-sided	Two-sided	
Explicit	3.42 N: 37 SD: 1.12	4.78 N: 36 SD: 1.10	4.09
Implicit	4.46 N: 35 SD: .74 3.93	5.18 N: 37 SD: .85 4.98	4.83
Low-expertise	One-sided	Two-sided	
Explicit	3.06 N: 37 SD: 1.13	5.31 N: 35 SD: .72	4.16
Implicit	3.34 N: 37 SD: 1.06 3.20	4.68 N: 38 SD: 1.27 4.99	4.02

Table 13
Effects of message sidedness and behavioral intention on behavioral intention.

One-sided	Explicit	Implicit	
High	3.42 N: 37 SD: 1.12	4.46 N: 35 SD: .74	3.93
Low	3.06 N: 37 SD: 1.13 3.24	3.34 N: 37 SD: 1.06 3.87	3.20
Two-sided	Explicit	Implicit	
High	4.78 N: 36 SD: 1.10	5.18 N: 37 SD: .85	4.98
Low	5.31 N: 35 SD: .72 5.04	4.68 N: 38 SD: 1.27 4.93	4.99

a longer period. Additionally, the sample used has a high level of education, and its inherent marketing and sales specialization is an open issue. Furthermore, because this research focused on a high-involvement product, the results cannot be generalized to other kinds of products. Exploration of other product and service categories is firmly recommended.

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