

Bloggers In It For Sex

by Misty Harris

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Nestled among the media's meditations on the popularity of blogs is a theory that lends new meaning to "cyber sex." According to Simon Dumenco, a prominent U.S. media analyst, people read blogs at least in part because they "want to get laid."

In this week's Media Guy column for Advertising Age magazine, Dumenco contends that knowledge of the hippest, hottest blogs can increase hook-up opportunities and boost sexual attractiveness. He maintains some people are using niche blogs such as Gawker.com and Defamer.com to gain pop cultural insights that make them more socially desirable and ultimately more likely to get lucky.

"It's like how people used to offer or borrow cigarettes, when people smoked more it breaks the ice, gives you a conversational 'in,'" Dumenco said in an interview.

"Blog culture just sort of accelerates and intensifies what's always been the case: Consuming certain sorts of media, certain cultural products, can give you talking points that make you more interesting to other like-minded people who are members of various social interest groups."

Dumenco doesn't identify a direct cause-effect relationship between reading a blog and landing a lover. But he does suggest an intrinsic link between people's yearning to be part of a collective and the prospects of a sexual encounter within that collective.

For example, participants in the semi-recent fad of flash-mobbing (simultaneous assembly in a public place, doing something bizarre, then disbanding) are said by Dumenco to have "scored a talking point" that temporarily made them "conversationally more interesting, more attractive" to fellow hipsters.

He writes that the trend likely died out as a result of its "insistence on rapid dispersal, which curtailed hooking-up opportunities."

David Long, associate professor of sociology at **King's University College** in Edmonton, says "there are undoubtedly any number of `desperate bloggers'" who log on in hopes of becoming "more hookupable." But he believes they're a small part of a larger trivial-pursuit subculture no longer willing to stand in supermarket lineups for tabloid gossip.

According to Robert Thompson, a professor of popular culture at Syracuse University, the prevalence of this subculture is evident in a changing public discourse that reflects the use of blogs as both social and sexual flint.

"You're starting to hear conversation openers that have clearly been lifted from that day's blog," he says. "It's kind of like going into a bar and having someone ask you what your sign is the cue is just taken from somewhere else."

Thompson agrees that, in certain circumstances, people seem more attractive if they're up on the latest news. But he says getting that news exclusively from blogs, which are largely cribbing from other media sources, cheapens the effect.

"On some level, that kind of approach to life makes you less interesting," observes Thompson.
"Ultimately, reading more blogs won't help you any more than reading Lord of the Rings for the 50th time."

Dumenco says that involvement in the blogosphere's "obsessive, hermeticallysealed self-referentialism" can indeed have a negative effect, turning people into shut-in bores.

But as a shortcut to social savvy, he believes blogs are increasingly relevant.

"I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say, 'Did you see that thing on Gawker about?'"

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