# Blogging as a business

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**ABSTRAKT** 

Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je dokázať, že blogovanie môže byť úspešným biznisom v

súčasnosti. Teoretická časť je zameraná na blogovanie, presnejšie lifestylové blogy a typy

marketingov, ktoré sú s ním spojené a praktická časť obsahuje komparatívnu analýzu ame-

rických a európskych blogov. Cieľom analýzy je zisiť ako sa dané blogy odlišujú s pri-

hliadnutím na ich marketing, používanie sociálnych sietí, umiestnenie reklamy a vzhľad

blogu. Na základe výsledkov je vytvorený záver a doporučenia pre niektoré menej úspešné

blogy.

Klíčová slova: Biznis, Blogovanie, Lifestylový blog, Marketing, Sociálne siete, Reklama

značiek

ABSTRACT

The goal of this bachelor thesis is to prove that blogging can be a successful way of

business, nowadays. The teoretical part is focused on the blogging, more precisely lifestyle

blogs and the types of marketing which are connected with it. The practical part consists of

the comparative analysis of American and European blogs. The goal of the analysis is to

find out how the mentioned blogs differ taking into account their marketing, usage of soci-

al media, advertisement placement and the layout of a blog. Based on the results, the conc-

lusion and recommendations for less successful blogs are created.

Keywords: Business, Blogging, Brand advertising, Lifestyle blog, Marketing, Social media

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#### INTRODUCTION

Blogs, blogging and bloggers have been the phenomenon of the internet currently. Blogs can spread the information or promote and sell the products. Through the blog, a company or an individual can create a community of the potential customers and readers. Blogging is a relatively new but popular way of making money. Many brands pay for the advertisements on the well-known blogs because they know it is an effective and proven promotion. Companies also create sponsorships with the bloggers.

It is difficult to become a professional blogger. It requires creativity, good writing skills and the quality content. The amount of people who have a blog as their full-time job is increasing not only in America but all over the world. The blogs, themselves, have been growing as well. There are more than 300 million of them in existence. They are usually divided into the professional and business blogs. Professional blogs are designed for the masses and publish interesting articles. They make money from the advertisement. Business blogs should attract the attention of a closer group of readers who are interested in a specific product or service. The purpose of these blogs is to promote the brand image.

The bachelor thesis is focused on the lifestyle blogs which include fashion, beauty and travel content. Theoretical part describes all the mentioned data and online marketing as an important tool of blogging as a business. In the practical part, comparative analysis of American and European blogs is executed. It examines parametres such as advertisement placement, layout of the blogs and marketing strategies. At the end of the thesis, author reports the results of the research and make recommendations on how to improve the design of some of the blogs and their marketing.

#### METHODS AND GOALS OF THE THESIS

The goal of the theoretical part is to define what blogging is, what types of blogs exist and how it has changed over the years. The following chapters describe marketing, more precisely types of online marketing with focus on the social media marketing. The last part connects blogging and marketing into the business.

The goal of the practical part is to do a comparative analysis and find out how American and European blogs differ. Comparative analysis is an experimental method based on comparing more things that seem to be similar on the surface but might differ inside (Business dictionary, 2012). The analysis is based on the important research questions like what type of marketing is used on the blogs, where are the advertisements placed, how companies address the bloggers and what is a layout of the selected lifestyle blogs. In the other chapters, it is explained why social media play an important role in the blogging, who are the most popular bloggers, how much they earn from the social media and last but not least, design and structure of the blogs. Author also makes recommendations regarding the improvement of the marketing strategy and layout. The results of the analysis are provided in the end of the practical part complemented by attached charts.

## I. THEORY

#### 1 BLOGGING

## 1.1 The blog phenomenon

The blogging phenomenon has grown incredibly over the past years. According to the research from the website Statista (2017), there were over 300 million blogs in existence on January 2017. Blogs became the "personal diaries" for many people. Some write because they want to differentiate themselves, others focus on what they are good at or it is simply a need to socialize and share. (Byron and Broback 2006, 20-25) Many authors of blogs are passionate about what they do and consider their blogs as an expression of their creativity. They can communicate and share the content with the rest of the world. Not only individuals have understood the potential of blogs but also the companies. It is a completely new and unimaginable way of communication. Blogs can sell, offer, promote, attract new customers and keep in touch with them. (Dvorak, 2002) There are also people, called bloggers, who cooperate with the companies and get paid for promoting their products or services on their own blogs. However, having a blog as a business is not an easy task. According to Yaro Starak (2016, 13-15), the most important thing is to gain trust from the readers. People read the blogs, get information from them, share them and all of it happens incredibly fast in the online world. That is probably the reason why blogs became phenomenon.

## 1.2 Definition of blog

Collins Business dictionary (2012) describes blog as a website or an online journal written by individuals. The word blog is derived from the word web and log. A typical blog has a menu system whose pages contain articles, reviews, photos or product details. There should also be links to social media accounts for a better engagement. Blogs need to be updated regularly and because of that the archive is created. A person who is in the charge of blog should focus on the topics that are interesting for readers.

## 1.3 Types of blogs

In the past, blogs acted as the online diaries. They mostly offered personal information and pictures. However, it has changed and developed throughout the history. Current blogs are not only about individiual lives but they focus on different topics such as technology or politics. Authors Byron and Broback (2006, 65-68) defined different categories of blogs in

their book. Blogs of companies, product blogs, brand blogs and also blogs which represent a specific type of business belong among them. Personal blogs differentiate from the ones created for business purposes. Company blogs publish articles about the products, news or announcements and it is all connected to the company. Product blogs focus on the promotion of a product or service. There are also brand blogs which represent an important part of marketing and promotion. They focus on the new customers. Typical example of that is a blog owned by the Microsoft company. The key element is searching because their users want to find a content quickly and easily. Some blogs have even changed into the individual firms nowadays. As stated by Houghton (2014, 7), blogs might develop depending on the needs of companies and their customers.

## 1.3.1 Lifestyle blogs

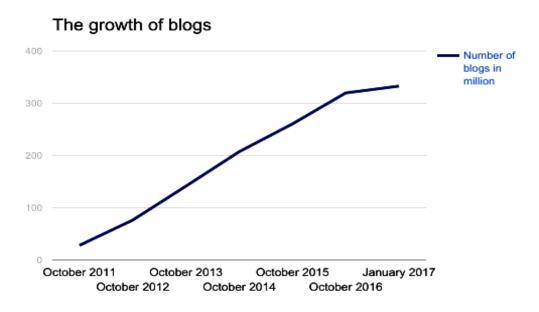
Lifestyle blogs are also called by digital "word-of-mouth" communities. A lifestyle blogger writes about his daily activities and personal interests. Lifestyle bloggers usually focus on fashion, beauty and travel. These blogs represent the powerful environment for a brand advertising. (Macarthy, 2016, 3) Consumers are often influenced by bloggers and follow their trends and recommendations. The goal of sponsored posts and brand advertising is to persuade a reader to buy the product. The number of digital influencers is rapidly increasing according to the website Mediakix (2015) and many brands create a sponsorship with them. This type of business is closely connected to the social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram or Youtube.

## 1.4 History of blogging

Anyone can write or read blogs now but it was not always like that. Blogging has a relatively short history. Cameron Chapman (2011) exclusively writes an article about it for the website Webdesigner Depot. The first blog was written by Tim Berners-Lee in 1992. He invented the world wide web and wrote articles about it. It did not have all the features of blog but it was quite similar. Justin Hall and his homepage Links.net also did not look like a blog today. The word weblog was first used in 1997 by Jorn Barger who created the blog Robot Wisdom. Weblog was officially shortened and changed to blog in 1999 by programmer Peter Merholz. The same year, a popular blogging platform Blogger was founded. It allowed anybody who had an internet connection to blog for free. In the beginning of 2000, only 23 blogs existed worldwide according to a list made by James Garett but the number

grew rapidly and by the end of the year 2006, there were over 50 million blogs according to the Blogosphere report. It was a revolutionary period. One of the major blogging platforms Wordpress.com was invented in 2003. Advertising platform AdSense was also founded that year. It was a first network which connected a blog content with ads. Making money from blogging was no longer surreal. Many people even started to write about how to make money blogging. Blogging has become so much popular that Word of the year of 2004 in the Merriam-Webster Online dictionary was blog. Soon after, the first video blogs were published and when Youtube started, bloggers and vloggers could share their content this way as well. American study from 2005 showed that 32 million of inhabitants read blogs. Actually, mainstream media such as CNN teamed up with bloggers to produce new posts and articles. The number of personal websites and microblogs like Twitter or Tumblr grew to 152 million in 2010 according to Vangie beal. (2014) The research done by Statista.com showed that only 28 millions of blogs existed on October 2011, the number rapidly increased in the following years as shown in the graph bellow called The growth of blogs. On October 2014, it was around 207 millions and 2 years later, it reached almost 320 millions. On January this year, the number increased to 332,8 millions of blogs existing all over the world. The graph shows the growth of blogs within 7 years.

Ten years ago, blogging was only a way of communication online but with the help of social media, it has spread and influenced the whole society. The future of blogging is clear. It will grow even more.



Graph 1: The growth of blogs (source: author)

#### 1.5 Blogging platforms

Bryan Haynes (2016) describes blogging platforms as the websites which allow their users to create a blog. The majority of them is free and user-friendly. It is important to choose the right one depending on what type of content a person wants to share. According to Bryan Haines, the most popular platform is WordPress.com. It started in 2003 and nowadays, it is the largest self hosted blogging tool used by millions of people every day. WordPress.com is a content management system (CMS), in other words, it is an application or programme that is used to create and manage a digital content. The cheapest and easiest way to start a blog is by using WordPress.com as stated by Bob Lotich. (2010) However, if a person or a company wants to create a blog for the purpose of business, it is better to use WordPress.org. The only difference is that a company has to buy a web hosting and a domain. It costs up to 100 dollars, but the investment is small in comparison with the profit it might bring. WordPress allows their users to customize a theme and add plug-ins or ads. It also cooperates with the Google Analytics which is a helpful tool for measuring the traffic of blog visitors. On the other hand, blogging platform called Square-Space is not as affordable as WordPress but it offers more professional attitude and layout. It is suitable for bloggers who prefer a better blog funcionality. Benefits of using Square-Space are definitely the iCloud back up system, connectivity with iPad or iPhone and professional layout of the website. Some of the disadvantages may be the higher price and technological difficulty.

Google owns a popular blogging platform Blogger.com which is free and easy to set up. It has a simple design and structure. Search engine optimization is excellent because Blogger shares all the benefits that Google has. Nevertheless, it is mainly used by amateurs. Blogger.com is not intended for business purposes or professional writers. Blogger is a good choice for people who want to share their family photos or travel experience. Tumblr is a platform that has some of the features of Blogger. It is also free and it is simply a matter of minutes to create a blog. Users can share text, photos, videos, music via this blogging platform. The best thing about Tumblr is an option to customize everything from the colours and fonts to tags and keyboard shortcuts. Integration with Google Analytics is another benefit. Tumblr belongs together with Blogger and WordPress between the most popular and used platforms. Jux.com, Blog.com, LiveJournal and many others also have unique features but as stated by Houghton (2014, 60), they are used by minorities.

## 1.6 Summary of the first chapter

Blogging is a popular way of expressing opinions and discussing topics. It has developed and grown through the years and become an important part of online life. People write a content according to what their readers are interested in, therefore blogs divide into categories. The major difference is between the personal blogs and business blogs. Bloggers who write about their everyday life, hobbies and experience are called lifestyle bloggers. On the other hand, blogs which are created for the purpose of profit are usually set up by companies. Their aim is to promote and sell the products. Either it is one or another type of blog, choosing the right blogging platform is the key. The suitable design, layout, and of course the content may attract readers or potential customers. It is generally known that many businesses use blogs as a reliable distribution channel of the marketing strategy.

To sum it up, the chapter covered basic definition of blog, history of blogging, types of blogs and last but not least blogging platforms. The next one will focus on the marketing, more precisely online marketing and its features because it is a matter of fact that blogging and marketing coexist together in the world of business.

#### 2 MARKETING

## 2.1 Online marketing

Online marketing is a type of marketing which uses the internet for advertising and selling. Authors Byron and Broback (2016, 70-73) consider search engines, email, social media and content for the most important tools of online marketing. There are many types of online marketing such as email marketing and social media marketing. They are extremely popular nowadays. Online marketing is one of the many distribution channels and is currently the most used one.

## 2.2 Types of online marketing

There are different types of online marketing as stated by Vladinír Baránek (2016). Search engine marketing is a type of Internet marketing which can increase visibility of the specific website. When potential customer browse the Internet, the keywords of a product or service of the company will appear higher in the listings, therefore it is a paid type of marketing and is considered to be effective and reliable. Online advertising consists of the placement of ads on the websites. When a company creates an email subscriber list from their website, they can use an email marketing as an effective way to send all the information about the product or service straight to the customer. Susan Ward (2016) considers Mobile marketing as a more private way of promoting but still efficient enough. People have their phones with them all the time and getting a text message might be a good way to attract a potential customer.

#### 2.2.1 Blog influerencer marketing

It is generally known that many social influencers and lifestyle bloggers get paid for promoting products on their blogs or social media. Mediakix (2015) states that Federal Trade Commision formed strict rules for this type of marketing. The rules focus on a description of advertising online, correct labeling of a sponsored product and also protection of a consumer against the false acts. Blog influencer marketing works as follow. The company chooses an appropriate digital influencer for their product. This person may get free products or money for a compensation. All is written and explained in the contract. Blogger has to label the brand and the product used in their post or shared on social media. It has to be clear that it is a promotion of a specific product. Every product for which a blogger gets

compensation has to be published and labeled properly. Choosing a rightinfluencer is extremely important for blog marketing sponsorships. The blogger needs to gain a trust from followers and meet all the requirements, says Miranda Burmbaugh (2016). The major problem is that readers often consider sponsor posts to be poor quality, therefore companies should focus on top influencers rather than spread sponsorships between many websites. In the 21st century, the blog influencer sponsorship is a popular way of making money.

#### 2.2.2 Social media marketing

Social media are platforms which exist for sharing, creating contacts or promoting. Social media used for business require different strategic goals. Their goal is to promote, attract potential customers and make money. Blogging and social media are closely connected and they complement each other. Kawasaki (2014, 17, 81) and Macarthy (2016, 3-6) share the same opinion that every business needs a social media marketing. It has become a necessary part of all types of businesses. It is important to build a strong relationship with the customers and keep them. The aim is to show them a content which they would share with other people. That is the way how social media marketing works. According to Social Media Examiner research from 2015, 91% of respondents claimed that this type of marketing helped them to improve their business. (Macarthy 2016, 6) If a company does not use social media for the purpose of promotion, they should add them to the marketing strategy. The most popular ones are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram and Pinterest. People all over the world connect, share and browse them every day.

#### 2.2.2.1 Benefits of social media marketing

Social media have developed quickly, and companies want to embrace the opportunity and use them as much as possible while they are powerful. According to Industry report done by Social Media Examiner in 2016, 97% of sellers joined at least some of the social media according to Forbes. (2014) The reason is simple. Brand recognition spreads out through the networks, interaction with the new customers is easier and more effective and last but not least, business is about the people. People are the users of social media not companies. People buy and sell. The more people are involved, more profit a company makes.

#### 2.2.3 Digital marketing

Digital marketing is defined by SAS (2016) as a promotion of products or brands via electronic media such as apps, podcast, digital television etc. A company can analyze their marketing campaign to understand what works and what does not by using digital marketing channels. Internet is an important channel but so do the other ones. Consumers are not only influenced by what a company tells about themselves. Most of them are influenced by what other people say about the brand. People prefer brands that they can trust. Digital marketing focuses on the preferences and needs of customers. Choosing the right channels is important. Competition also cannot be overlooked. Many businesses struggle to make good strategic decisions and differentiate themselves from the others. The keys to digital marketing success are managing relationships with customers, responding, interacting with them and collecting data. A company or brand should know their customers better than anybody else so they can communicate the way they prefer. They need to know customer's preferences and expectations. Company should focus on the buying cycle and create special offers like buy one get one free to attract the customer. Digital marketing and advanced analytics can monitor what works and what does not in the campaign. This helps to improve a customer experience. Marketers need to access all consumers and marketing data to deliver the best possible customer experience in the most efficient way. (SAS, 2016)

#### 2.2.4 Newsletter marketing

Newsletter marketing means that companies send information about their products or services via email based on the subscriber list. The list is created from all the visitors of website who agreed to recieve a content. It is important for businesses to find out what products could be appealing for the potential customers. Effective newsletters are informational and catchy. They need to attract the attention of consumers so they actually open the email and read it. Businesses often try to differentiate themselves. For example, a brand that sells teen fashion would probably use funny phrases or slang words to hit the target audience. It is also necessary to include a story and explain why is the specific brand better than the others. Newsletters allow to distinguish a brand from the competition and thanks to that, people can recognize them easily. The popular method is 90/10 which means that the newsletter should consist of 90% of information and 10% of sales promotion. The website

Bigcommerce (2015) states that relevance, creativity and optimization for different mobile devices are the main features of every newsletter.

## 2.3 Google marketing tools

Google is not only a search engine according to Pamela Vaughan (2015). It has a variety of useful tools for companies and marketers. The most essential ones are Google My Business, Google+, AdWords, Google Analytics, Google Drive, Youtube etc. Google My business is a type of free advertising. When a potential customer searches for a company, Google automatically adds local results. It also shows the position on the map. This tool is connected to Google+ which is mostly used by local businesses. Creating Google+ Business Pages allows marketers to share a content and information about the specific products or company itself. Digital marketing consultant Alex Chris (2015) explains how the other popular tools work. AdWords, which may be expensive in comparison with the rest basically means pay-per-click. A company needs to create the key words related to business and when customer searches them, it will appear on the right side of the results. A company pays only if the potential customers actually click on the advert. This tool can help to attract traffic quickly and effectively. AdSense is similar to AdWords. Google pays bloggers for having their ads on the website and for every visitor's click. The bloggers get the same money as AdWords pays. However, it is not possible to use both of these tools for increasing a business. Google has strict policies on how to use the platforms. For example, it does not allow to place more than one advertisement in the fold of a blog. Both of the tools are great for promoting and making profit, it only depends on a good planning and marketing strategy. The next useful tool is Google Drive. It is an online storage where people can save photos, documents or videos. The capacity is up to 15 GB. It also allows users to create and share a content so it is easy for collaboration. Google Drive is free and it has the same features as Microsoft Office. In other words, it consists of Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, Excel spreadsheets and forms. Last but not least, there is Google Analytics. The service offers quality information about the events on the blog and it is free. It shows a detailed overview of behaviour of visitors. It is easy to follow their steps, compare data or find out how many visitors a blog has. Pamela Vaughan (2015) and other authors of the book Blogs: Publish and Prosper (2006, 38-39) consider Google Analytics to be the most effective marketing tool.

#### 2.3.1 Youtube marketing

Youtube is the world's most popular online platform for videos and it is also owned by Google. It is a great marketing tool and in comparison with other social media it has more benefits. Videos reach the majority of people so attracting the potential customers is easier. On March 2017, the website eBiz (2017) proclaimed Youtube for the third most visited website on the internet and according to Michael Miller (2012, 12-14), it is the best place to get a massive traffic with minimal effort. Youtube marketing strategy is fast and powerful. Many businesses use it together with other social media to reach more people.

## 2.4 Brand advertising

The brand is an identification of a product by a name or sign. It differentiates a product from the competition. Brands need to have a label, something that gives an information about the object. In the Danish book Branding and advertising, author Hansen (2003, 13-20) states that the most popular brands like Coke, Apple, Mars are all corporations that created an unique brand image. However, what is even more important is the brand attitude. It depends on what a person thinks about the specific product or service, including the strengths and weaknesses. Every company's goal is to create a positive brand attitude. Jim Osterman (2007, 9-10) agrees with the idea that positive brand awareness truly influence the consumers. Nevertheless, it is the advertising that brings a brand to the customer's minds. Currently, advertising agencies make campaigns to build a powerful brand awareness. Advertising does not involve only TV, print and radio but it is the popular online viral type of content that changes the whole aspect of successful advertising nowadays.

## 2.5 Summary of the second chapter

Online marketing is probably the most popular way of advertising right now. This chapter described the majority of the types, especially the blog influencer marketing which is basically the subject of the bachelor thesis and social media marketing which is closely connected to the topic as well. Social media are definitely an indispensable part of online marketing. It allows individuals and companies to share a content and promote. In addition to that, advertising and brand recognition belongs to marketing strategy of every business. Another part was dedicated to Google as a website used by millions of people every day and whose special tools are useful for marketers and businesses in general. Since it is all

explained, it is inevitable to get to the last chapter of the theoretical part which connects blogging and marketing into the business.

#### 3 BLOGGING AS A BUSSINESS

Business is defined as an activity of buying and selling the products by the Collins Business dictionary (2012). Blogs represent a great opportunity for businesses to spread their names into the online world. However, having blog as a business is difficult because blogs require a content, consistency, sponsors, writers, readers, basically anyone who is willing to invest their money and time. Blogs became the traffic-boosting platforms and that is why many brands cooperate with them. According to Mintel annual retail report from 2012 done by Content marketing institute (Aaron Orendorff, 2015), 81% of consumers trust what they read, including advertisements and 67% of customers made a purchase because of the blog. The majority of companies that blog daily have a better profit in comparison with the ones that publish monthly.

Blogging also may be an essential part of the business plan. Companies invest money into online advertisement because this type of marketing strategy is currently more effective. Internet is growing extremely fast and brands are aware of that. If a blog has many readers, the companies will definitely want to use an opportunity to put an advertisement and they will pay for it. The most popular tools for adding ads are AdSense and Yahoo.

Another method of having blog as a business and make profit out of it is sponsoring. Sponsoring is more efficient than advertisement. Blogs have to meet the requirements of business of potential sponsors and vice versa sponsors also have to match the blog. A typical example is when a company which makes handmade buttons sent some of their products to a person who is a knitter to try it out. A knitter needs buttons and appreciates handmade things so this person shared it on her blog and since many of her readers have the same passion, the reactions were positive and the company started cooperating with the blogger. (The Blog Maven, 2016) Bloggers should decide with whom they want to cooperate. It keeps trust from the readers if a blogger promotes things that he or she actually likes. In some cases, it may occur that a specific brand wants to be the only exclusive one to promote. It has to be stated in the contract that a blogger would not cooperate with any other brand than the one that pays him.

Successful blogs connect with the audience, give inspiration and their writers are passionate about what they do. Professional blogs should have a calendar for consistency

and planning, unique concept, subscriptions, social shares and links to products. Success is a matter of longer time but valuable according to Aaron Orendorff (2015).

## 3.1 Successful bloggers

Annika Darling (2014) published a list of the top earning bloggers of the world. The following two years, the same results came out on a different website. Michael Arrington who is founder of TechCrunch earns up to 800,000 dollars per month which makes him the richest blogger. He created a blog full of technological news and is considered to be the most influential person in the world of technology. Another famous blogger Perez Hilton who writes about celebrities also belongs to the list. It is interesting that there is only one woman between the top earning bloggers. Her name is Gina Trapani and she is the CEO of the blog Lifehacker. The blog gives tips about how to make everyday life easier. She earns about 100,000 dollars per month. The rest of the successful bloggers write about economy, technology or lifestyle. Blogs are a huge part of the online world and earning money from it can be lucrative but difficult at the same time. The blogosphere consists of 40 million new blogs created every month so the competition is enormously strong.

#### 3.1.1 Successful lifestyle bloggers

Meghan Blalock (2014) explains that the most successful lifestyle bloggers make more than 1 million dollars annually and together with their publicity, free designer gifts and travelling, it seems like a perfect job. For example Rachel Parcell, founder of the blog Pink peonies, earned about 960,000 dollars in 2013. However, it is not easy to find out the exact incomes of lifestyle bloggers, the numbers can be only estimated. The writer also mentions some of the richest bloggers in her article on the website WhoWhatWear like Aimee Song, Chiara Ferragni or Kelly Cook who also earn around 1 million annually. Their incomes do not come only from blogging but also collaborations, public appearances and their own collections.

## 3.2 Benefits of blogging

First, it is necessary to mention that blogging as a hobby and blogging for business are different and also the benefits that come with it differ. The popular bloggers make a lot of money but it is not by far the only advantage. Over and above, it is not easy to get profit from blogging because the popularity does not come overnight either. Nick Scheidies

(2013) names all the other benefits except the money like the improvement of writing skills. It is said that a person who wants to write a book should blog first. Blogging is a great way how to express feelings and organize thoughts as well. That is probably the reason why millions of people do it according to Corey Wainwright. (2015) Being a part of the community might be the key for some bloggers too. Blogosphere is vast and is all about the people who share the excitement for a certain thing.

#### 3.2.1 Disadvantages of blogging

Full-time blogging is a job like any other and despite the many benefits, there may occur some disadvantages as well. First of all, it is time consuming. Some bloggers spend literally hours writing. Whether they do it for money or passion, it can influence their social life in a negative way. The weak eyesight and other health problems can also affect professional bloggers. Except for physical problems, there is probability of having some mental issues connected with stress. Blogging requires an extreme patience and a lot of hard work, as stated by Aaron Orendorff. (2015) People who blog should take care of themselves in every possible way and relieve the stress, adds Sandesh. (2009) It is a long process to become popular in the blogosphere. As a result, waiting for success and blogging for profit ends up with failures in the 80% of cases, according to statistics.

## 3.3 Summary of the third chapter

The last chapter covered blogging as a way of making money. The most popular bloggers earn up to 800,000 dollars, and it is ten times more than what some of the fashion bloggers make. The business of blogging has its benefits and also disadvantages. Except for the money and publicity, blogging has more positives. People can improve their writing skills, help others and share tips and information about something that they are good at. On the other hand, like every job, blogging can be exhausting and influence the health. Many writers have physical and mental problems which are connected with stress. Despite that, blogging can be a successful way of business and it will spread even more in the next years.

## II. PRACTICAL PART

#### 4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In the practical part, the comparative analysis of the lifestyle blogs will be done. The analysis consists of 100 selected blogs, more precisely, 50 American and 50 European blogs. All of them focus on the lifestyle, especially on fashion, beauty and travel. American blogs were chosen randomly but in regard to the popularity on the social media. European ones were selected from 40 different countries out of 44 so the research would be valid and relevant. It covers the majority of the European countries due to the accuracy and high quality of the research.

The analysis examines the types of marketing, advertisement placement, the layout of the blog and the ways of communication between bloggers and companies. The goal of the practical part is to find out how American blogs differ from the European ones. The analysis was being done from February to March 2017 and all of the charts were made by an author using Word document. The data was collected and inserted into the chart and evaluation derives from the gained facts.

## 4.1 Advertisement placement

Advertisement placement is the first examined parameter of the analysis. Advertising on the lifestyle blogs can be highly effective, however, it is important to place the ad on the right place so it draws the attention of a reader. As shown in the Table 1: Advertisement placement below, only half of the blogs have actual advertisements in the form of banners. They are placed on the right side of a blog, also called the side bar, together with social media icons, archive and the others. Currently, banners have been replaced with the less noticeable links and photos in the text. The 90 percent of American blogs use direct links in the blog post to advertise the products and often connect the links to pictures from the website or an online shop. On the other hand, European blogs mostly show the pictures of products. To sum it up, banners are not so popular on the blogs anymore, companies probably realized that people are overloaded with advertisements from the other digital media and use more natural and hidden forms such as links and photos.

There are also new types of the applications which connect the products used in the blog post with the actual online shops of the featured products. It gives a specific information about the outfit so the shopping of the look of a blogger has never been easier. However, it is still on the half-way of success. Only few bloggers have been using it so far. Like-

toknow.it is a popular app in America and Europeans have a similar one called LookBook. Unfortunately, it is not so wide-spread. Both of them work together with the social media so visiting the blog is not necessary. A potential customer can simply follow Instagram or download the mentioned app and search the looks. More information about the exact figures is provided in the Table 1 below.

Ad placement	Ad banners (on right)	Photos of products	Direct links in text	Liketok- now.it
American blogs	23	40	47	15
European blogs	25	49	44	Lookbook 10

Table 1: Advertisement placement (source: author)

## 4.2 Social media marketing

Social media are mentioned in many parts of the bachelor thesis. The reason is that all of the bloggers and the majority of companies use them for the promotion. The comparative analysis indicates that every single examined blog makes use of the social media marketing. Whether it is Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, all of them can serve as a good advertising platform. The table below indicates which social networks are the most popular ones in America and Europe. Facebook leads on both of the continents with the highest number of users and Instagram closely follows. Twitter is on the third place and it is clear from the analysis that American bloggers prefer it more. Next is Pinterest whose popularity has been slowly growing recently. 78 out of 100 bloggers use it but it is more popular in the U.S. Bloglovin is not so known, but despite that the bigger half of the blogs connect to it. During the research, I came across two platforms which used to be more popular in the past, before Instagram and Twitter existed, but there is a considerable gap between them now. It is Gmail which is almost negligible with the numbers, and last but not least, Tumblr. Surprisingly enough, only 13 blogs indicate Gmail as an important social media platform with a slight preference in Europe and only 8 blogs have the Tumblr page. American blogs definitely lead in all of the types of networks except Gmail which proves that their ability to socialize and make use of every possible promotional source may be more significant than in the Europe. It is also connected with the fact that social media were founded by Americans and therefore they are expected to have the know-how.

Social media	American blogs	European blogs
Facebook	49	50
Instagram	49	49
Twitter	46	40
Pinterest	42	36
Bloglovin	32	28
Gmail	6	7
Tumblr	5	3

Table 2: Popular social media (source: author)

## 4.3 Newsletter marketing

Apart from social media marketing, there is also Newsletter and Youtube marketing. As it was explained in the theoretical part, newsletter marketing is basically subscribing into the blog database by providing the email address. The analysis showed that 29 American blogs and 18 European blogs create a subscriber list. Right after a person visits the blog, the small chart asking for an email appears and the visitor can enter the list and receive information on a regular basis. Newsletter marketing is being extremely popular nowadays, especially in the U.S. For better illustration, there is a picture of the subscriber form below which appears after opening the blog.

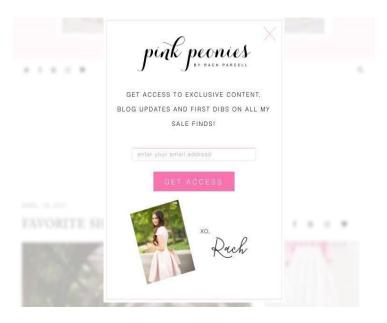


Figure 1: Layout of a newsletter form (source: Pink peonies blog)

## 4.4 Youtube marketing

Youtube is the second most visited website in the world according to the research done by Alexa Amazon company in 2016 (2017) and it is getting more and more popular currently. The paradox is that even though Youtube was founded in America, less than half of the U.S. blogs present themselves on this platform. On the other side, European lifestyle bloggers make videos, vlogs, tutorials and share it on Youtube increasingly. Another interesting fact is that American bloggers make more money uploading on Youtube than the others. It might be connected with the large amount of fashion and cosmetic brands which reside there, and therefore collaborations occur more often and they are also better paid. To sum it up, 28 European blogs use Youtube for promotion and only 20 American ones do so.

## 4.5 Online shop

Another part of the comparative analysis focused on the online shop. The goal was to find out how many bloggers are successful enough to launch their own line of products and sell it on the internet. This type of collaboration does not happen frequently. Blogger needs to have an extremely big community to become an influencer so the company would offer him an opportunity to create his own project. It is necessary to mention the bloggers who are popular all over the world and sell their own products online. These are for example

Carli Bybel and Camila Coelho from America and Lydia Elise Millen and Lovely Pepa from the Europe. All of them provide an online shop as a part of the blog. Again, the research showed that bloggers in the U.S. are able to achieve more popularity this way, specifically 19 of them have the online shop and on the contrary, only 9 blogs from the Europe.

## 4.6 Layout of a blog

The majority of lifestyle blogs look alike. They have a similar structure consisting of the logo and menu bar at the top and social media icons with an archive on the right side bar. All of the 100 blogs meet these requirements. There are also other typical aspects of the blog like a calendar, archive, newsletter button and ads. The mentioned features are situated on the right side bar on all of the lifestyle blogs as well. Menu is probably the most important part of a blog because it shows what it consists of. In the case of the lifestyle blogs, posts often focus on the fashion, beauty and travelling. They are usually divided according to the menu categories, as shown in the Figure 2 below. Posts often have photos complemented by text and also the links to the online shops of the specific brands. Except the mentioned categories, there is also an ABOUT section which briefly describes an author of the blog. All of the examined blogs consist of the mentioned features. Last but not least, there is a contact section where all the necessary information such as email or address are provided.

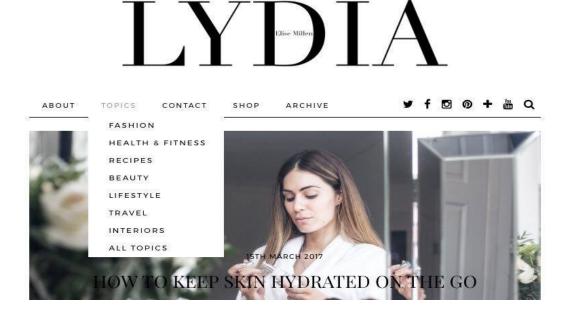


Figure 2: Layout of a lifestyle blog (source: Lydia Elise Millen blog)

#### 4.6.1 Contact for brand advertising

Brand advertising is an important part of all of the blogs as well. However, it may only occur when a company can contact a specific blogger. Therefore, each blog should include a contact section. It is necessary because the majority of communication happens via email, nowadays. Companies can send business offers, newsletters and all the important information to bloggers this way. The interaction between an author of the blog and readers is also possible. Despite that, 3 European blogs do not provide any contact details. These are a Swedish blog Jozefin Dahlberg, Slovak blog Mia's life and the Czech blog A Cup of Style. Surprisingly enough, A Cup of Style belongs to the best lifestyle blogs in the Czech republic and they won the Blogger of 2015 award. They also do many collaborations with the brands so it is interesting that a popular blog lacks such an inevitable thing. On the other hand, some of the American blogs do not have a category for contact in the menu but a special button called Advertise on or Be my sponsor on the right side bar as shown in the Figure 3 below. Blogs like EatSleepWear, CarlyCristman and Lauren Conrad seem to be more sophisticated and direct in this way. There are also cases, when a blogger wants to attract potential sponsors by showing them the brands which she has already cooperated with, for example the European ones like BeFrassy or Collage Vintage. It is clear from the analysis that even though that EU blogs are popular, the American ones can attract brands and collaborate with them more efficiently.



Figure 3: Sponsor sign (source: Lauren Conrad blog)

## 4.7 Income of the lifestyle bloggers

Despite the fact that it is not easy to find out how much the bloggers earn, because their incomes come from different sources and cooperations, the analysis tried to compare the numbers published on the social media and Youtube, especially, the profits based on the number of followers. Youtube and Instagram are well-known platforms that pay to the bloggers whose audience reach million or more. However, only half of the lifestyle blogs connect their blog to Youtube channel therefore the research could only compare available numbers. As a matter of fact, American bloggers make more money from the promotion on the social media and Youtube than the European ones. It is connected with the better engagement and the popularity on Instagram. Bloggers like Carli Bybel, Sazan Hendrix, Rachel Parcell or Camila Coelho have around 4 million followers on Youtube and Instagram and in comparison with the most famous European bloggers like Mimi Ikon and Negin Mirsalehi with less than a million followers, it is 4 times more, therefore their income is higher. Only one of the European lifestyle bloggers Zoella differs from the rest by numbers, she has around 11 million of subscribers on the Youtube and Instagram.

It is quite difficult to compare incomes of the bloggers, because their earnings do not come only from the blogging but also from many other sources like collaborations and personal projects. The analysis could only focus on the Youtubers and Instagram influencers who are paid according to the number of followers. (Marianna Hewitt, 2015)

#### 4.7.1 The popular bloggers on Youtube and Instagram

Lifestyle bloggers and influencers are people whose job is to try out new products, attend fashion shows, take photos, travel and to write about it. At least, that is what can their followers see on the blogs and social media. Youtube and Instagram are the most popular platforms as stated in the theoretical part. It seems like a perfect job to be a blogger but in reality, it is an exhausting and long process. For some, it took years to get recognized in this industry and there are still some who lag a lot. Popular bloggers often get questions like how is it possible that they make so much money and their life seems to be so effortless and insta- ideal. That is why this part of the analysis focused on 50 influencers who have Youtube channels and Instagram accounts.

Youtube videos of mentioned bloggers were analyzed from the point of view of popularity. In general, they are more personal than blog posts because the people speak

directly to the camera and show themselves to masses online and they are also easy to find. Therefore, it was more reliable to compare them. It is clear that all of the examined videos have a commercial purpose, whether it is a makeup tutorial, look book, review or some beauty tips. It is always included in the information box if the video was sponsored or not and the list of all of the featured products. However, promotion or more precisely, collaboration with brands is only one of the many reasons of success of bloggers. Influencers get paid for the amount of subscribers they hit and the number of likes they receive as explained in the previous chapter.

Another important source of their success is not connected with the promotion or making money at all. It is the sincerity they put into the videos. The most liked and seen videos are usually the ones, where bloggers open up and speak about their life, about the beginnings of their career or there are also videos dedicated to expressing the grattitude to their fans. For example Sazan Hendrix, Carli Bybel, Petra Lovelyhair and many more influencers are known for being kind and open on their social media. To certain extent, it is great that people care about each other, but at the same time it might be a bit dangerous. The lifestyle bloggers/ Youtubers always thank to their viewers for watching in their videos and it has an obvious reason. They know how important are the fans, readers and followers and without them their life would be totally different. The giveaways are also a popular way of appreciation the fans and half of the selected bloggers do it from time to time.

All of it works exactly the same on Instagram. Influencers make money by creating a promotional and aesthetically pleasing content but also share photos and details from their everyday life to keep the followers updated. They are getting paid for advertising, number of likes and subscribers. The most popular lifestyle Instagram accounts have from 5 to 10 million of fans. It is because, they are consistent, interesting and organized well like in the case of Negin Mirsalehi or Carly Cristman. Each blogger has her own style and therefore every account is different. What they have in common are the professional pictures of outfits, travel destinations and selfies as well. The research showed that apart from Zoella who is the most successful English lifestyle blogger and has around 11 million of followers on Instagram, American representative Camila Coelho has only 5 million followers. The other selected bloggers have up 1 million followers in the U.S and also in the Europe.

To sum it up, popularity of lifestyle bloggers on Youtube and Instagram is growing with the increasing number of followers and likes. All of the bloggers advertise on their

social media. However, it is difficult to define which bloggers are more popular because the American Youtube channels and Insta accounts have more subscribers but on the other hand, European bloggers reach receive more likes and views.

#### 4.8 Summary of the comparative analysis

The comparative analysis answered all of the research questions. First of all, advertisement placement was examined. As it follows from the analysis, all of the lifestyle blogs advertise products, mostly through the links and photos. They are usually placed in the blog post. Occassionally, banners occur on the right side bar of a blog. Currently, blogs can connect to the apps which provide all the details of the products used in a blog post. Liketoknow.it is a popular app in America and European blogs use Lookbook. Next part focused on the types of marketing. Social media marketing is the most popular and it is clear from the analysis that together with the networks it is an inevitable part of the blogging in general. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are used by almost all of the blogs on both continents with a slight preference of Twitter in America.

Another type of marketing, Newsletter marketing is more popular in the U.S. On the contrary, European blogs prefer Youtube. The analysis also showed that many influencers collaborate with different brands and create their own products available in the online shops. American bloggers have it as a part of the blog more often than the European ones.

The last part of the research compared specific blogs and their layout. Surprisingly, the layout is more or less similar with only few negligible differences. Lifestyle blog consists of the logo, menu with categories and blog posts with photos and complemented by text. All of the blogs have categories like fashion or outfits, beauty, travel and about.

However, the contact section is missing on 3 European blogs or is replaced by a special button Advertise on in the U.S. blogs. Generally, the majority of American blogs appear more professional and clear, due to the better graphics and marketing. To sum it up, 8 American lifestyle blogs meet the requirements including all types of marketing, brand advertising, online shop and a good layout namely, Pink peonies, Sazan, The beauty bybel, Song of style, The Blonde salad, Mia Mia, Lauren Conrad and The skinny and only 1 European blog Lydia Elise Millen. All the details are shown in the large chart in the attachment.

The analysis also proved that American bloggers care about visual and contextual part of their blogs a bit more and their marketing strategy is often successful enough to make a million annually as in the case of Rachel Parcell or Chiara Ferragni. European bloggers do not earn as much as the mentioned ones because of the many factors. The different economical situation, lack of companies which offer sponsorships, worse marketing, all of it might influence their incomes.

### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the analysis, some suggestions that could improve the popularity of the European blogs in general were made. First of all, every blog should have a menu bar with the categories, especially the contact section. This part was missing on some of the European blogs, therefore the readers or companies are not able to communicate with the author and vice versa. Focusing on the structure, the simple and clear layout attracts more readers than a disarranged blog full of pictures and marked advertisements as few European blogs have. The key is to organize blog precisely and not to overdo the amount of ads.

Obviously, advertisements are necessary in a popular lifestyle blog and as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, there are more types of them like banners, links and photos. It would be great to come up with something new like tagging the brands and the products straight from the photo published in the blog post or provide the list of featured products as a part of the specific section. Since the banners are slowly dissapearing from the blogs, they could be fully replaced with the links and photos leading to the online stores.

It is a matter of fact that every blog should have at least three social media accounts that are connected to it. Nowadays, it is necessary to post the content regularly on the platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Many European blogs had only 1 of them and it might be the reason why they are not as profitable as the competition because advertising on the social media is an inevitable source of profit for bloggers. Another suggestion is connected with the social media icons. They are usually placed on the right side on all of the selected blogs and the icons are very small. If they were located at the top of the website and were slightly bigger, they could possibly attract more attention and followers.

Next suggestion relates to the newsletter. On the U.S. blogs, it always appears as a table right after the opening of a blog so it draws attention of the potential subscribers. However, European blogs do not use newsletter much and if they do, they prefer less visible tables on the right side bar asking for email. Even though, that some people might consider the method of U.S. blogs annoying, it definitely works and much more readers click on the subscribe button.

Focusing on the layout and structure, there are two important things that were missing on some of the European blogs. These are the search button and an About section. The search button is necessary on every website, it is used for faster and better orientation on

the blog. However, one quarter of the European blogs do not have it. About section is inevitable as well because it provides information about the author of the blog. The mentioned parts should be added to the blog on a visible place.

Overall, American blogs seem to look more professional in comparison with the European ones considering the structure, organization of blog posts, photos and marketing. Despite the fact that they try to copy the U.S blogs in many different ways, they should create something new instead. They could also increase the popularity by attracting more sponsors, be active on as many social media as possible, do the brand advertising frequently, have some collaborations and projects, create their own products and add them to the online shop. People love to wear and use the products that the influencers do and having own fashion or makeup collection is always convenient. It is probably the best way of marketing and companies know it. European bloggers and also the American ones know that it is extremely difficult to stand out in the online world nowadays. Therefore it is necessary to make progress, be up to date and modern in the blogging business.

Another suggestion is dedicated to the companies. They usually cooperate and advertise only on the popular blogs. It is a pity that they are not aware of the fact that if they focused and supported the smaller blogs as well they could help the bloggers to grow and spread their image in the online world. By that, they would attract many new customers and make profit.

What might be the most important recommendation is to engage the public more. Readers can only comment or like the blog posts so far and these options are already available on all the social media. Bloggers could do more giveaways and polls for example. Fans would definitely appreciate it. They could also create a section for adding the photos of the readers wearing the similar outfit or recreating the same makeup look. This new way would surely motivate and bring satisfaction on both sides. Applying these suggestions is only at the theoretical level but it is likely that blogs and companies themselves will find out what works the best, what should be changed and improved in the near future.

### **CONCLUSION**

This bachelor thesis proved that blogging became phenomenon, nowadays and that together with marketing, it can grow into the business. Despite the fact, that it does not have a long history, it will surely have a terrific future.

Theoretical part provided all the necessary information about blogging, marketing and business based on the research of the relevant literary sources. Practical part of the bachelor thesis showed the differences between selected lifestyle blogs which was actually a purpose. The major difference is that some American blogs are slightly more professional and more profitable concerning the layout and popularity on the social media. Based on the analysis, the recommendations were made in order to improve the blogs which do not have a clear structure or they are simply not popular enough. To sum it up, the goal of the bachelor thesis was accomplished.

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# **APPENDICES**

P1 Tables created by author for better organization of comparative analysis

# APPENDIX P I: AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN BLOGS

American blog	Social media marketing	Newsletter marketing	Youtube marketing	Brand advertising	Contact for bu- siness	Own online shop
Pink Peonies	•	~	~	~	•	•
The Bea.B.	V	V	~	V	~	×
Vicky's St.	V	×	x	V	~	×
Lovely Lu.	V	×	×	<b>~</b>	~	×
Sazan	~	<b>v</b>	~	<b>~</b>	~	~
Song of St.	V	V	V	<b>~</b>	~	~
TheFash.G.	V	×	×	<b>~</b>	~	×
Kayture	~	×	~	~	~	×
The Bl.Sal.	~	~	~	~	~	~
Native Fox	~	×	×	•	~	×
Gary Pep	~	×	~	~	~	×
Camila Coe	~	×	~	~	~	~
TheVivalux	~	~	×	~	~	×
CIHT?	~	~	×	~	~	×
MiaMia M.	~	V	~	~	~	~
The Rue C.	~	×	×	V	~	~
Eat S.W.	~	V	×	V	~	×
Carly Cri.	~	•	~	V	~	×
Life with m	V	V	~	~	~	×
Ironnsalt	~	V	~	V	~	×
ThriftsThre	V	V	×	~	~	×
Mindbodys	V	V	×	V	V	×
Hej Doll	V	V	×	V	V	×

			I	<u> </u>	1	1
Sinc. Jules	<b>~</b>	<b>✓</b>	×	<b>~</b>	~	•
Bl.Momma	<b>✓</b>	<b>&gt;</b>	×	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	×
Bl. Black	<b>&gt;</b>	×	×	<b>✓</b>	<b>'</b>	~
Blonde abr.	<b>&gt;</b>	×	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>'</b>	•
Taste of Ko	<b>&gt;</b>	×	×	<b>~</b>	<b>v</b>	•
Bigcityblog	<b>~</b>	×	×	~	~	×
Ivorylane	~	<b>~</b>	×	~	~	~
Sequins	~	V	×	V	~	×
Crystalin	~	×	×	V	~	V
LA girl	V	V	×	V	~	×
Blare June	V	×	×	V	~	×
Feisty h.	V	V	×	V	~	×
The Stripe	V	V	V	V	~	×
Cup of Jo	~	×	×	V	~	×
Lauren C.	V	V	V	V	~	V
Oh my dear	V	×	×	V	~	×
Treasures	V	V	V	V	~	~
Champagn	V	×	V	V	~	×
Skinny con	V	V	V	V	~	V
Pau Dictad	V	×	V	V	~	×
13thoughts	V	V	×	V	~	×
Tastethesty	V	V	×	V	~	~
Fresh ex	~	V	V	V	~	~
Denver dar	~	×	×	V	~	×
Justine C.	V	×	×	V	~	~
Eye swoon	V	V	×	V	~	×
Egg canvas	V	×	×	V	~	×

European blog	Social media marketing	Newsletter marketing	Youtube marketing	Brand advertising	Contact for bu- siness	Own online shop
Jozefin D.	~	×	×	•	×	×
Happily G.	V	×	~	V	V	~
Masha S.	~	V	V	V	~	×
Poppy love	~	~	~	•	~	×
Zoella	V	×	•	•	<b>'</b>	×
Emily C.	~	~	~	•	~	×
Mikuta	V	×	•	•	<b>'</b>	×
Collage V.	<b>v</b>	×	×	•	<b>'</b>	×
Lovely P.	V	×	•	•	<b>'</b>	~
Lydia E.	~	<b>~</b>	•	•	<b>'</b>	<b>~</b>
Alabaster f.	~	×	×	•	<b>'</b>	×
Scent of O.	~	×	~	•	~	×
Fashion H.	~	×	×	•	<b>'</b>	×
Negin M.	~	×	~	•	~	~
Kenzas	~	×	~	•	~	~
Petra L.	~	×	~	•	<b>'</b>	<b>'</b>
Natinstablo	V	×	•	•	<b>'</b>	~
Sweetlady	~	×	×	•	~	×
Mimi Ikon	~	×	~	•	~	×
Anouska	V	×	V	•	~	×
Ohhcouture	V	V	×	~	V	×
Mia's life	~	×	×	V	×	×
Moma	~	~	~	V	V	×
My London	V	×	×	~	~	×

Londoner	V	V	×	~	V	x
Becca T.	V	~	~	V	V	×
Lela L.	V	~	V	V	V	x
Life with E	V	×	×	V	V	×
LDN Diary	V	V	V	~	~	×
The Bzebra	V	×	×	~	~	×
Amlul	V	V	~	V	~	×
Reasons	V	V	×	V	~	×
Angelica	V	×	×	V	~	×
I am Ella	V	×	×	~	~	×
Sofia C.	V	×	~	V	~	×
A Rosie	V	V	V	~	~	×
Simplyblog	~	×	×	~	~	×
Jess Ann	V	V	~	~	~	×
Cup of styl	~	V	~	~	×	~
Wish wish	V	×	~	V	~	×
All thatshe	~	V	×	~	~	×
Kat got	~	V	~	~	~	×
The Edited	V	×	×	V	~	×
Befrassy	V	×	×	~	~	×
World ofW	V	V	V	V	~	×
Golden D.	~	×	V	~	V	×
Cvetybaby	V	×	×	~	~	×
Journelles	~	×	×	~	~	~
Lazy Sund.	V	×	×	~	V	×
Collectedb	V	×	×	~	V	x