

## Making money from blogging is not as easy as it seems



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By Cheow Sue-Ann

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For those keen to turn your casual blogging into serious business, it may not be as lucrative as you think.

"There are the high-profile cases we all know and there is the blogging cartel that calls itself NuffNang," says social media expert Dr Michael Netzley from the Singapore Management University.

"But if you look at the raw numbers, not that many people can successfully earn more than what we can casually call 'extra money' via their blogs."

The assistant professor of corporate communication (education) of Lee Kong Chian School of Business adds: "Right now, I think blogging can be a legitimate career, but the number of vacant positions in this field are very few.

"Many of those who are successful bloggers - both in terms of readership and income - are either early bloggers who established a following long ago, or are working for a professional or semi-professional outfit that is for profit."

Mr Marcus Ho, director of Social Metric, a social media marketing organisation, agrees:

"Maybe one out of every 50 bloggers make enough to make use of blogging as a full-time job.

"It is very rare, and a very long shot, but with enough passion, effort and consistency, a blogger can make about a few hundred dollars a month in a year or so."

But Mr Ho adds that he definitely believes that blogging can be a legitimate career if it is done right, and with enough effort and marketing know-how.

Social media experts explain that companies look at the web traffic going to blogs before they decide to put down money and endorsements.

"I think bloggers can make money, but only if they become respected journalists or thought leaders in their own field.

"So traffic to the website indicates that this blogger is becoming the go-to person. And it takes a lot of work to gain that, it's an art and skill why a person would pay attention to one food blogger and not others, or one lifestyle blogger and not the rest," says Ms Tania Chew, media industry watcher and consultant at boutique communications firm Word of Art.

One such example is Ms Wendy Cheng - who is better known as Xiaxue.

Ms Cheng, who is one of Singapore's most influential bloggers, raked in about \$25,000 in endorsements even before her baby son was born earlier this year.

Beauty and lifestyle blogger Peggy Heng, who pockets \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month from her blog, says: "It might come across as surprising for many, but blogging actually generates my main income."

She adds that the perks she has enjoyed include overseas trips, being privy to product launches, all kinds of beauty treatments and invitations to movie and stage gala events.

A Korean cosmetic surgery company even sponsored her plastic surgery.

But it's not all glitz and glamour, Miss Heng and other bloggers say.

Says Miss Heng: "(It's about) generating new topics and ideas that interest readers, infusing advertisements into my blog in a non-hard selling way, staying connected and updated with the latest news and trends.

"Behind the curtains, we slog just like a media company (except that we are an all-in-one).

"My definition of a blogger is: we are editor, director, photographer, model, sales, manager and public relations all rolled into one."

Miss Heng concedes too that "as much as social media is growing rapidly and (is) huge in our current era, advertisers are still rather conservative about spending money on what they are unfamiliar with (the non-traditional platforms)".

In short, it can be difficult trying to convince advertisers that bloggers are new-age influencers.

Food and lifestyle blogger Brad Lau - more commonly known by his online monicker Ladyironchef - tells The New Paper on Sunday: "I would say the few main challenges I face

include the uncertain income, the lack of privacy wherever I go and whatever I do, and the very frequent mental block on what and how to deliver messages and information."

He brings in an average four-figure income each month, which does not include additional perks such as sponsored meals and trips overseas.

Another similar company, Gushcloud shares that each endorsement deal can be worth anything from \$1,000 to \$80,000.

Nuffnang shares: "Basically there is a revenue share model, where the company takes a cut of the profit, in return for matching and recommending bloggers to companies."

Beauty bloggers also claim there are "risks" they have to take.

Juli from Bun Bun Make Up Tips recently had her face erupt in pus when she was trying out a sponsored beauty treatment. She had to wear a face mask all the time, a bad experience that she shared on her blog.

In the emotionally charged post, she likens the breakout to "having barnacles growing on her face".

She writes: "You can't imagine how difficult it was to look at photos and not cry. I cry the most when I'm washing my face. My self-confidence has plummeted to rock bottom. I cannot remember the last time I was so depressed over an external condition."

Blogger Fitriana Lim tells us about her own experience. "For review purposes, I bought a cream online and immediately tried it. After a few days, my skin started breaking out.

"Even when I stopped using the cream, my skin continued breaking out and the situation went out of control. I had to seek help from dermatologists and my skin only cleared up after about 10 months."

Horror stories aside, blogger Jamie Tan Yi Jing, 19, is happy with her role and doing what she likes, despite only having a PSLE certificate.

She makes "an average of hundreds of dollars a month" endorsing brands like Nicole by OPI, The Body Shop, Casio, Shunji Matsuo @ 313, DRx Clinic/Medispa and other equally well known beauty and lifestyle labels.

Miss Tan says: "I didn't complete my studies and started blogging around the time I stopped schooling."

But she confesses that she is still bothered when readers ask her "from time to time about my interest to resume studying".

"I've learnt to just shrug it off since I should be doing what makes me happy - blogging."

Miss Tan admits that "full-time blogger" is just a nicer term for myself".

She explains: "I'm actually a homebody and I love to stay home and do nothing all day long.

"Blogging isn't entirely a full-time job unless you're big names like Xixue or Qiuqiu."

She also insists that it is not as easy or glamorous as it seems.

Says Miss Tan: "As a blogger, we are not only the "model" for the products, we are also usually our own editor, photographer and website designers.

"It's really a one-woman show. There are times when I'd be caught in a rut and have difficulties getting started on a post, or there'll be some days when you just feel blah and don't look good in pictures."

But Miss Tan, who won a Cleo blogging competition in 2010, says her blogging journey has been smooth and relatively easy, as she is taken care of by her management company, Gushcloud.

It puts her in touch with sponsors and advertising companies.

Challenges and perks aside, what is the best take on blogging?

Dr Netzley puts it succinctly: "If my child came to me and said she wanted to be a blogger when she grows up, I will smile, support her, and ask her what else she will do to earn money and support her blogging habit."

### **Bloggers & their endorsements**

WHO: Jamie Tan Yi Jing

BLOG: [jamietyj.blogspot.com](http://jamietyj.blogspot.com)

ENDORSEMENTS: Shunji Matsuo @ 313, DRx Clinic/Medispa, D'Nail Palette, Maybelline, L'Oreal, Vichy, Hada Labo, Marc Anthony, NIP+FAB, ZA, Majolica Majorca, Nicole by OPI, The Body Shop, Tokyo Bust Express, Casio and BASE Entertainment.

PAGE VIEWS: 30,000 a month.

WHO: Brad Lau

BLOG: [www.ladyironchef.com](http://www.ladyironchef.com)

ENDORSEMENTS: Resorts World Sentosa, Esplanade, Quayside Isle, Nestle, Cadbury, KLM Airlines, Taiwan Tourism Board, Starwood Group of Hotels and Intercontinental Hong Kong.

PAGE VIEWS: 2 million a month.

WHO: Peggy Heng

BLOG: [www.thydowager.com](http://www.thydowager.com)

ENDORSEMENTS: Spa Infinity, White Sails Yacht, Tokyo Bust, Beijing 101, Poh Heng Jewellery, Essensuals Bugis, Hong Kong Disneyland, Misakicon, Bellabox, Item Clinic and Fabulous Smile.

PAGE VIEWS: 300,000 a month.



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WHO: Fitrina Lim

BLOG: [fitrina-inamorata.blogspot.com](http://fitrina-inamorata.blogspot.com)

ENDORSEMENTS: Becky Age-Lock & Moisturizing Wild Yam Mask, Lovemore From Taiwan Masks, Sexy Look Rejuvenating Duo Lifting Mask, Lovemore Snail Mucin Healing and Hydrating Mask as well as Sexylook Intensive Repairing Black Cotton Mask.

PAGE VIEWS: 10,000 a month.