

Mum's the word at Vegas blogging convention

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At this weekend's BlogWorld Expo, billed as the world's largest blogging convention, women who blog about their family life are commanding more than a dozen special sessions and are intensely sought after by the plethora of corporate marketers stalking the event.

For years, the stereotypical blogger was a geek yammering on about the latest technology or a celebrity-obsessed scribe dishing about Paris, Lindsay and Madonna.

But the powerhouses in blogging nowadays may surprise you: Mothers.

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"This shows the power of the blog and the power of moms," said Beth Davis, who blogs at ThePlusSizedMommy.Com and was brought to BlogWorld by Healthy Choice, a frozen diet food line, to discuss a potential sponsorship.

"If I say something about a product being wonderful and you have to try it, my readers are going to listen to me because of my influence, and go out and buy it," Davis said.

It was unclear how many of the 2,500 BlogWorld attendees from 20 countries are "Mommy bloggers," but the topic of the kind of gifts and sponsorships they're receiving loomed large over the proceedings.

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) earlier this month threatened to impose hefty fines on bloggers who don't disclose they've received free items or money in exchange for their coverage.

Some mommy bloggers were pleased that their work is being taken so seriously but also feeling besieged by governmental interference.

Rachel Herrscher, chief executive of the parenting networking site TodaysMama.Com, questioned why the government needed to issue such rules when the public can tell what advertising is.

"If I go to a basketball game and I see banners hanging, no one needs to tell me that that was paid advertising," Herrscher said.

"As consumers, we're savvy."

Yet both the rise of Mom bloggers and the involvement of the government also reflects the fact that blogging and other social-media outlets like [Twitter](#) have gone mainstream.

Not only was attendance the show's highest ever, but conventioners were treated by major Las Vegas resorts during the weekend to show tickets, passes to attractions and elaborate parties with free food and alcohol.

"Last year and year before, big businesses didn't get it," said Blogworld chief executive and co-founder Rick Calvert of his efforts to shop for deals and organize events for the 1,750 bloggers who attended last year and 1,400 who came in 2007.

"This year, we're getting calls from every hotel in town. They want to host events for our bloggers and podcasters."

The convention's attendees were an admittedly eccentric group, brought together to compare technical, publicity and marketing ideas.

It was not uncommon to see people bumping into one another as they walked and typed on their phones.

Convention speakers seemed unfazed as members of their audiences tapped away at their computers, checked their iPhones, shot photos or updated their status on Twitter.

One expert on social media, Mari Smith, explained that she always wears an article of pale blue clothing because of her loyalty to the micro-blog site Twitter. Real estate [blogger](#) Daniel Rothamel of RealEstateZebra.com wore a black suit jacket covered in swathes of fabric that boasted the websites of other real estate blogs.

During a keynote address, blogger Chris Brogan not only accepted that his audience's attention was fragmented but spoke in front of two large screens that showed the latest Twitter updates about the talk he was delivering.

"We need to drive this stuff to business," Brogan, president of New Marketing Labs, told the audience.

"The salad days are done. It's not time to be all gee-whiz with each other anymore. It's time to think how this will affect our business."

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