Content Analysis of Blogs: Transformation in Adulthood

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Abstract

New media has had a profound effect on three of the most essential categories of society in the twenty-first century: economics politics and the exchange of ideas. Democratisation of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content is the most prominent character of new media. Most technologies described as new media are digital often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible and interactive. In today's average web/blog post, news articles, op-eds amongst others, are not only entries in mixed media: photos, writing, video format but they are organized according to hyperlink organisation. The study focuses on how blogging causes transformation in adult population and behavioural changes in human beings. The study also looks how blogs help in sharing knowledge and whether it enhances relationships on a personal and professional level.

Keywords

New media, blogs, content analysis

Introduction

New media is a 21st century term to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound. In fact the definition of new media changes daily and will continue to do so. New media evolves continuously.

New media holds out a possibility of on-demand access to content anytime, on any digital device as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Another important promise of new media is the democratisation of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content. What distinguishes new media from traditional media is the digitising of content into bits. There is also a dynamic aspect of content production which can be done in real time but these offerings lack standards and have yet to gain traction.

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Wikipedia is an example of combining Internet accessible digital text, images and video with web-links, creative participation of contributors, interactive feedback of users and formation of a participant community of editors and donors for the benefit of non-community readers. Facebook is an example of the social media model in which most users are also participants.

Most technologies described as new media are digital often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible and interactive. Some examples may be the Internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMS and DVDs. New media does not include television programs, feature films, magazines, books or paper-based publications unless they contain technologies that enable digital interactivity.

Nevertheless in seeking a definition of new media we need some basic tenets that can help us get a better positive understanding of what new media is beyond what new media isn't. New media can be characterized by the variegated use of images, words and sounds. These networks of images, sounds and text data are different from old media formats such as hardcopy newspapers because of the nesting characteristic.

Nesting is a way of organising of the presentation of information according to subjects while paying secondary attention to the context. In the place of context, nesting: most commonly seen in text or image hyper-linking, is a format that fosters organisation in a way in which elements interact with one another instead of simply following a straight order. New media requires a non-linear interpretation since many sources are often oriented around the same subject-centre but are not always collated. At the end of the day all this means is that one of the primary characteristics of new media is that it is freed from the linear restrictions of older formats such as newspapers, books and magazines.

Importance of new media

New media has had a profound effect on three of the most essential categories of society in the twenty-first century: economics politics and the exchange of ideas. Economically new media is the globe's commercial skeleton. Fiber optic wiring networks between the worlds' cities connect one to another. Not only does this simple fact make global finance and trade a physical reality since data networks between firms and investors are universally accessible but it also impacts the possibilities and conceptions of so called old commercial enterprises while giving rise to the new ones. Every time a customer goes online to shop for that rare book title or that overstocked iPod or even the digital camera from a large retail store available down the block, new media is on both sides of that transaction. New media is not only the product but helps to mould the process of electronic commerce.

This means that manufacturing and production are largely focused on making the hardware that supports new media while softer enterprises like news agencies, programmers and artists adapt their crafts to the flows of the electronic current. New media processes and communications add another dimension to the business and consumers' practices.

During the French Enlightenment the authors of the famed *Encyclopaedia* created a system of footnotes that referred to certain other entries. The subtle structure of such an organisation underlies a profoundly partisan representation of facts and images. The same is largely true in hyperlink writing. While the content that is mentioned and presented within an article may be empirically accurate, it is important to note that the selection of sources and outside connections may still be highly subjective. This quality makes research a more shaded and complex enterprise and sometimes even enriches the reader's understanding of a given issue.

The exchange of ideas and images are is of primary importance in considering the potential for new media. Not only are political horizons widened but so too are artistic and educational ones. Today, there is a tremendous ability for individual users who write, paint, report, educate, etc. to make connections to one another in a way that might allow them to circumvent the conventions of institutional and closed opportunities.

Blogs are a part of new media

The most interesting part of new media has to do with the restructuring of research, global economics, social interaction and the currents of writing and dissemination of all information that have accompanied its emergence. Web and blog-writing in particular are not particularly revolutionary or ground-breaking because it changes the way people use language or construct basic sentences. It is ground breaking because it allows people to structure and nest information into documents differently. In today's average web/blog post, news articles, op-eds amongst others, are not only entries in mixed media: photos, writing, video format but they are organized according to hyperlink organisation.

Hence, the said study of new media is important because it is associated with blog-writing and its analysis.

Operational definitions

Blog: A blog is a shortened version of Web log. Blogs are essentially sites on the Web that may cover news and events, the interests, hobbies or business of the person writing the blog or virtually any subject.

Blogging: Blogging is the act of posting content on a blog: a Web log or online journal, or posting comments on someone else's blog.

Literature review

Audiences as media producers: The study 'Audiences as Media Producers: Content Analysis of 260 Blogs,' examines the role of the Internet as a revitalizer of social relations together with growing research on the social potential of the Internet revealing beneficial and harmful behavioral consequences of Internet use. Extensive studies of blogs have demonstrated their ability to create online networks social contact. Communication researchers have studied personal home pages in the past but they have not focused on blogging, which is different because it utilizes more user friendly software and sometimes presupposes a journalistic approach also dictates a diary-like format and orientation. The study analyses a random sample of all such blogs to determine content characteristics and speculate on gratifications obtained from sustaining them. The approach will determine audiences as producers of media content and whether this technology extends the traditional boundaries of journalism and address the personal and social gratifications of blogging.

This content analysis revealed that blogs, on average, feature personalized accounts of information that resemble the diary format more than the independent journalism ideal.

The study also found that these template-influenced online diaries were frequently extensive and verbose, offered moderate interactivity and made little use of a graphical user interface or multimedia tools. The online diary metaphor serves the blogging context well because these online daily musings are disorganized, frequently fragmented, and largely self-referential.

Blog analysis: trends and predictions: The data has been derived from the research paper: Blog analysis – Trends and Predictions. The project attempts to explore the abundant information available in the form of blogs and try to apply various natural language processing algorithms to find out interesting interpretations of the available information. It aims at predicting the trends and other inherent latent information presented in the blogs with various NLP techniques. It has shown interesting results with the sample data and hence it has great potential to predict and present various interesting information.

Blog content analysis: The National Archives of Singapore commenced a study to carry out a content analysis of blogs in relation to the World War 2 Interpretative Centre, Reflections at Bukit Chandu (RBC) that was opened in 2002. Such analysis provided important supplementary feedback and information to those that are already obtained via official feedback forms, occasion interviews of walk-in visitors and online feedback from users of virtual exhibitions. The work aims to directly contribute towards the understanding of blog analysis in these areas.

Content analysis of corporate blogs: The researcher has extracted the data from the 'Content analysis of corporate blogs as a relationship management tool,' journal. The purpose of this study was to examine how major corporations in the USA utilise corporate blogs for building and maintaining relationships with various publics. The design, methodology and approach of the research was to apply the relationship management framework, a longitudinal content analysis of corporate blogs which was conducted in 2006 and 2008. The blogs are identified by a thorough search of blogs operated by corporations listed on Fortune 500 companies or Interbrand Top 100 global brands. This study proposed a new research framework for studying corporate blogs.

Research methodology

The researcher has found that applying content analysis to blog content is a relatively easy process that allows researchers to perform and prepare data at their convenience and to avoid lengthy ethics approval procedures. The method provides a rich opportunity to study users' styles, patterns or preferences that does not necessitate any researcher intervention.

The purpose of this research is to study how blogging causes transformation in adult population and how blogs by and large connect to the community and bring about behavioural changes in human beings. This research also focuses on how blogs help in sharing knowledge and whether it enhances relationships on a personal and professional level.

Research questions

1. What is the present state of knowledge sharing practice by the bloggers?

2. Does blogging cause transition of digital knowledge in adulthood?

3. Do blogs by and enlarge connect to the community and bring about behavioural changes in adulthood?

4. Can blogs help open bloggers to views, sharing of experiences, behaviour, solve problems, enhance articulation, improve literacy and inculcate in them the cultural, intellectual, philosophical and socio-psychological changes?

5. What are the different views expressed in blogs by the bloggers?

6. What are the descriptive elements of blogs?

Aims and objectives

1. To ascertain how blogs can help open bloggers to views, sharing of experiences, behaviour, solve problems, enhance articulation, improve literacy and bringing about cultural-intellectual–philosophical and socio-psychological changes among the students.

2. To determine the different updates on the blog formats along with addressing basis for selection of news and views by bloggers.

3. To investigate the foremost reasons of transformation that has taken placed in bloggers.

Hypotheses

1. Social media helps transform the concepts of identity and community.

2. Adulthood takes place when the individuals deal with the social, cultural and political changes with the help of Social media.

3. Bloggers start their blogs for expression.

Sampling design

The study was Content analysis based research on 15 bloggers with specific target respondents comprising of Post Graduate students pursuing Communication and Journalism Programme at University of Mumbai, India. It studied how blogging causes transition in adulthood. Blogs by and large connect to the community and bring about behavioural changes in human beings.

The respondent students had voluntarily chosen an assignment 'to start and maintain the blogs' out of 10 parameters of internal assessment of the Communication and Journalism programme. The other parameters were Writing test, Survey, Analysis of Content, Seminar, Producing audio visual teaching aids, Producing two radio programmes of not more than 30 minutes and not less than 15 minutes duration, Producing a publication, Internship and Producing 20, one-minute news stories on Mobile format. The assignment was in partial fulfillment of the Programme.

The methodology had been used quantitative and qualitative. The content analysis was done on daily updates made by the respondents on their blogs. The researcher has done a research more contemporary and relevant in India (which is a developing country) because people are starting, maintaining blogs and being exposed to new technology and development.

Very few studies have been conducted on this topic with Social media and transition to adulthood perspective.

Methodology

This study required both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was used for investigating the consequences of blogging. Secondary data was obtained from the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that is created by the students for a blog. The content analysis was done on daily updates made by the respondents on their blogs.

For data presentation and analysis, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used.

Data processing

The researcher has chosen a sample size of 15 bloggers for a long research period that was for four months: August, September, October and November in the year 2012. A study had been made to study their each post over the period of four months.

Content analysis was conducted to identify and quantify structural and functional properties of the blogs. The researcher has coded for 21 categories. The names of the 15 bloggers were as : Nahid Bhutt , Srirekha Chakravarty,   Jessy Jacob, Pranay Dalvi, Ruchita Bania, Prathamesh Maskar, Ninad Khakar, Josh Joseph, Shivani Vishwakarma, Sneha Das, Madhuri Prabhu, Danielle Fernandes, Jerusha Gaikwad, Sandhya Dagwal and Tushar Ovhal.

The researcher had found 10 major categories of content of the bloggers. Which were as: Business and economy, General, Natural Disasters, National News, International News, Renowned Personalities, Entertainment, Problems, Media and Social Media and the Sports.

Most of the blogs consisted of news updates. Hence the above categories were made. The Business and Economy category included the blog updates consisting of the news related to business and economy for example: A post by Pranay Dalvi dated 15 September, 2012 stated: TATA's return to Nagpur after 125 years with reality project, was considered under this category. The General category stated things related to festivals, health, food, spirituality, diary-type personal thoughts, friendship, gaming, nature, self- development, environment, poems, scenery, photos and philosophy. This category depicted individualistic and intimate forms of self-expression. These blogs were highly self-referential. For example one blog post that falls in this category is Health Concerns that mentions important health tips and 10 ways to be happy, stated by Jessy Jacob on 5 October, 2012. The National News consisted of issues related to India and that which falls under the National Concern. The International news category stated problems and things related to outside countries. For example: Srirekha Chakravarty discussed American elections and updated her post in November, 2012. The Natural Disasters categories mentioned things related to earthquake, hurricane etc. The Renowned Personalities category included discussion about popular people for example: Jessy Jocob in her

post, dated 6 October, 2012 mentioned about: A singer and a columnist Varsha Bhogle committed suicide. The Entertainment category includes films, movie-reviews, celebrity gossip etc. The political, local, regional, religious, infrastructure, social, problems also including crime, and terrorism is stated under the category of Problems. The news related to Facebook, twitter, journalism, advertising etc. fell into the category of Media and Social Media. The Sports category states all the news related to sports: tennis, cricket, badminton, lawn tennis etc. and the news about the players in their respective sports was also covered under this category.

Also a study was made whether the bloggers have inserted visuals or not for their each blog post.

The researcher had further measured the text length by counting the number of words in the first entry of each blog.

Data analysis

**Table 1: Name of bloggers and their frequency of blogs updates**
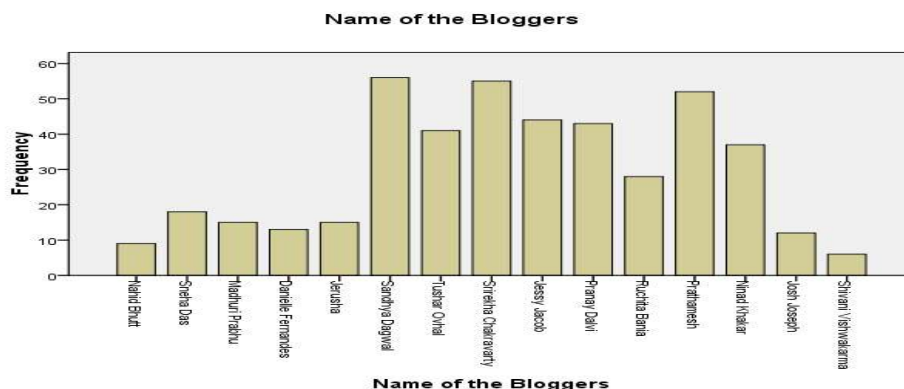
The variable chosen for the above data was Name and the Value labels were the names of the 15 bloggers and the values were added accordingly in the chronological order of their names. The above chart shows the frequency: the number of times each blogger has posted. The freqency of Nahid Bhutt is 9, Sneha Das is 18, Madhuri Prabhu is 15, Danielle Fernandes is 13, Jerusha is 15, Sandhya Dagwal is 56, Tushar Ovhal is 41, Srirekha Chakravarty is 55, Jessy Jacob is 44, Pranay Dalvi is 43, Ruchita Bania is 28, Prathamesh is 52, Ninad Khakar is 37, Josh Joseph is 12 and Shivani Vishwakarma is 6.

The frequency chart shows that the maximum number of posts was updated by Sandhya Dagwal with a count of 56 entries over a period of four months. The minimum number of posts was updated Nahid Bhutt with a count of nine entries.

There was no consistency in the blogs updated by the bloggers. Some bloggers updated many posts while some bloggers updated a very few blog posts.

Table 2: Content categories and number of blog updates made in each category
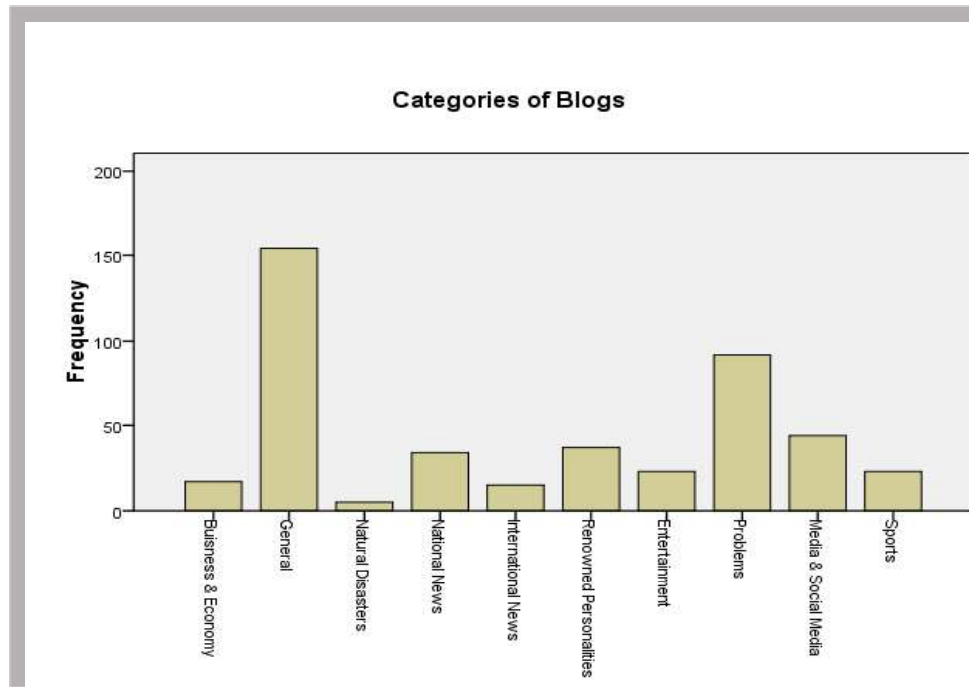
The above data shows the number of entries made in each category. There were 17 blog updates in the Business and Economy, 154 in General, 5 in natural disasters, 5 in National News, 34 in International News, 15 in 37 in Renowned Personalities, 23 in Entertainment, 92 in Problems, 44 in Media and Social Media; 10 in Sports category consecutively. The bar chart shows that the maximum blog updates fell in the General category. The students discussed more about festivals, health, food, spirituality, diary-type personal thoughts, friendship, gaming, nature, self- development, environment, poems, scenery, photos and philosophy. This shows that the students liked to express their thoughts and views to other people and friends rather than sharing news. Their approach was descriptive. The blogs featured a more diary-like format which accounted for the lack of a vivid interface. The bloggers in their majority viewed the Internet-related tools as the means to publish their personal musings. Also, the students discussed and posted news under the problems category. The chart shows quite a number of entries by the bloggers in the same. The students discussed various problems related to political, local, regional, religious, infrastructure, social, crime, and terrorism. This shows that most of the students today are reading news and are kept aware of the various happenings that take place around us. Along with self-awareness the blog updates are also a

medium to spread awareness amongst other people and make them cautious. Then in the 3rd rank was Media and Social Media news covered by the students. This shows that today's youngsters are more discussing about Social Media: Facebook; Twitter etc. and the same is gaining traction amongst them. They also seem interested in the activities of journalism and advertising thus discussing about media. Very less news was covered under the category of Natural Disasters.

Visual analysis

There were 175 posts with visuals and 269 posts that were without visuals. Most of the blogs were in textual format. But also the usage of the visuals is not very less.

Gender

Among the 15 bloggers there were nine females and six males. Also content analysis of each blogger was made.

Language used

14 bloggers posted their blogs in English wherein Tushar Ovhal posted his blog updates in Marathi. This research studies blogs in two languages: English and Marathi.

Conclusion

After thoroughly examined the data by the researcher, there was no consistency in the blogs updated by the bloggers. Some bloggers updated many posts while some bloggers updated a very few blog posts. The students discussed more about festivals, health, food, spirituality, diary-type personal thoughts, friendship, gaming, nature, self- development, environment, poems, scenery, photos and philosophy. This shows that the students liked to express their thoughts and views to other people and friends rather than sharing news. Their approach was descriptive. The blogs featured a more diary-like format which accounted for the lack of a vivid interface. The bloggers in their majority viewed the Internet-related tools as the means to publish their personal musings. Also, the students discussed and posted news under the problems category. The chart shows quite a number of entries by the bloggers in the same. The students discussed various problems related to political, local, regional, religious, infrastructure, social, crime, and terrorism. This shows that most of the students today are reading news and are kept aware of the various happenings that take place around us. Along with self-awareness the blog updates are also a medium to spread awareness amongst other people and make them cautious. Then in the 3rd rank was Media and Social Media news covered by the students. This shows that today's youngsters are more discussing about Social Media: Facebook; Twitter etc. and the same is gaining traction amongst them. They

also seem interested in the activities of journalism and advertising thus discussing about media.

Also the study revealed that more females are educated today and are exposed to online tools. There is scope for writing blogs in various languages today.

Blogs are thus, a medium to spread awareness, make people cautious of the happenings around them. It also serves as a medium of education. They also learn programming skills and find a way to connect with other bloggers, friends, colleagues, family etc. It provides them self- gratification and serves as a medium to open to be more expressive, and help construct their knowledge. It also becomes a habit when it is appreciated by others. Thus, blogging in general brings about cultural changes, inculcates in them problem solving skills, enhanced articulation, and improved literacy intellectual, philosophical and socio-psychological changes.

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