BLOGOSPHERE:
HOW YOUTH PERCEIVED BLOGS CREDIBILITY

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Abstract
Malaysia practice open democracy and would continue to promote digital democracy as Internet is an engine for economic growth and a portal to a knowledge society. Malaysia which has set its sights on becoming a high-income nation in nine years had one of the liveliest and least controlled blogosphere in the world. Bloggers are not only limited to adult political specialists or amateur journalists, but also in the world of youths, where blogs offer an outlet for personal expressions and reflection, as well as way to communicate and connect with others. The overabundance of information available online, coupled with the heavy reliance on the Internet by information-seekers raises the issue of the credibility or quality of blogs found online. Questions and concerns about credibility stems from the fact that Internet and digitization technologies have lowered the cost of information dissemination while increasing the accessibility to information. Using quantitative approach, this paper aims to present some findings in relation to the youth's perception on the credibility of blogs. Considering the wide usage of blogs and its influences among Malaysian Internet users, these surveys while by no means comprehensive, gives a preliminary idea of the dynamism of the blogosphere in Malaysia and may explain how to assess the credibility of online information.

Keywords: *Blogs, credibility, youth, blogger, blogosphere*

BAGAIMANA REMAJA MEMPERSEPSIKAN KREDIBILITI BLOG

Abstrak

Malaysia mempraktik demokrasi terbuka dan akan berterusan mempromosikan demokrasi digital memandangkan Internet sebagai berpengaruh sebagai jentera perkemabnagan ekonomi dan portal kepada percambahan ilmu dalam kalangan masyarakat. Malaysia yang telah menetapkan untuk mencapai status Negara berpendapatan tinggi dalam tempoh sembilan tahun dikenali sebagai Negara yang mempunyai sfera blog yang paling ceria dan paling kurang dikawal di dunia. Pemblog bukan sahaja terbatas kepada ahli politik atau wartawan amatur, tetapi juga bagi kalangan remaja yang beranggapan Blog sebagai saluran menyuarakan pendapat serta berkomunikasi antara satu sama lain. Lambakan maklumat dalam talian ditambah dengan kebergantungan terhadap Internet dalam kalangan pencar=imaklumat, telah menimbulkan isu credibility atau kualiti Pemblog. Persoalan mengenai kredibiliti berpunca daripada teknologi digital yang telah mengurangkan kos pengedaran maklumar dan pada masa yang sama meningkatkan kebolehdapatan maklumat. Melalui kaedah kuantitatif, makalah ini bertujuan menyampaikan hasil kajian berkaiatan persepsi remaja terhadap kredibiliti blog. Berdasarkan penggunaan blog yangberleluasa dan peningkatan pengaruhnya ke atas pengguna Internet di Malaysia, kajian ini berusaha memberi gambaran mengenai kedinamikan sfera blog di Malaysia serta menjelaskan kebolehdapati maklumat dalam talian yang kredibel.

Kata kunci: Blog, kredibiliti, Pemblog remaja, sfera blog

The Malaysian Blogosphere

One unique aspect of the Internet is the availability of opportunities to serve both consumer and producer of content. Although some users may choose to surf the world wide web, taking in media content, others create their own content and use blogs as a medium through which their voices can be heard. In this respect, blogging provides Internet users an outlet to create and share information (Hollenbaugh 2011).

Malaysia practice open democracy and would continue to promote digital democracy as Internet is an engine for economic growth and a portal to a knowledge society. According to Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib

Tun Razak when delivering his keynote address during the first Malaysian-Asean Regional Bloggers Conference held on 24 April 2011, Malaysia which has set its sights on becoming a high-income nation in nine years had one of the liveliest and least controlled blogospheres in the world. On that note, Malaysia must thank Tun Mahathir Mohamad, during his tenure as prime minister in which when he developed the Multimedia Super Corridor, he had promised to the world that Malaysia would never censor the Internet. Malaysia, with a population of 27 million has 10 million Facebook users and millions of blogs (New Straits Times April 25 2011).

However, the practice of digital democracy has its challenges, he also added that governments today were being confronted not just by guerrillas and mercenaries armed to the teeth with deadly weapons, but also by cypertroopers who wage viral warfare with the might of their keyboards, keypads and smartphones. The mobile phone, armed with WiFi, high-speed broadband, short message service and other forms of text messaging can become an enemy of the state (New Straits Times April 25 2011). To ensure that the people did not fall for lies and half-truths found on the Internet, education was the key that will give the people ability to decide on what was truth and what was not (The Star April 25 2011). Blogs are now expanding its influence on the overall society as they are widely used as a new media after the Internet has risen as the key media. The findings from the Household Use of the Internet Survey 2008 that canvassed some 5000 home Internet users revealed that 63.5 percent of home users knew what blogs are with 9.5 percent of them having their own blogs. Among those who knew what blogs are, only 43.9 percent of them accessed blogs. Blogging communities and directories rate the highest with 63.5 percent, followed by media blogs 47.2 percent, blog search engine 42.8 percent, business blogs 19.6 percent and other blogs with 17.5 percent.

Blogs and Youths: A Complementary Relationship

Since blogs are particularly attractive among youths for the potential to satisfy their growing self-consciousness and self-awareness (Steinberg 2002), it is assumed that dissimilarity in motivations exist among youths and adult bloggers. Hence, it is suggested that studies on blogging motivations should examine age groups respectively. Some empirical studies attempting to draw profiles for bloggers (Herring et al. 2004; Trammell 2004) discovered that teenage female bloggers constitute the majority of bloggers.

According to the Household use of the Internet survey 2008 conducted by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) there was a relatively smaller group of users aged below 15 years in contrast with that of the 15 to 19 years old. This indicates that the interest in Internet usage starts in the earnest when students are in upper secondary schools beginning with the ninth year of formal education in Malaysia. This interest appears to take hold through to the next age cohort where respondents pursue their first degree, possibly as a

result of intensifying usage of ICT in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. In broad generational groups, the main percentage of household user represents the pre-teenagers and teenagers up to the age of 19 is 24.7 percent compared to adults of 20 to 49 aged with 65.8 percent.

According to Huffaker (2006), blogs offer youths a place to construct narratives and share stories, an important aspect of identity exploration. Identity exploration remains an ultimate concern for the emerging youths, it is a time where youths can try out different identities until they construct a cohesive one to carry into early adulthood. Blogs provide a platform where youths can present and explore their identity or identities online. Similarly, on the edge of early adulthood, youths begin to interpret their lives in terms of narrative, a series of connected events or stories that bind the past, present and future. This practice strongly influences the self-concept and self-esteem. Blogs, which are time-stamped, chronologically ordered series of journal entries are conducive to telling stories or constructing narratives, providing youths a way to connect the events in their lives and even reflect upon them.

Moreover, blogs have many characteristics that can help create or maintain social ties. Peers and other social connections have important influence on youths, especially in terms of socialization. Peer networks also help youths develop notions of trust, loyalty, intimacy, friendship, romantic affiliation and social status. Characteristics of blogs include the ability to comments on posts and to link other bloggers, forming a community in which all bloggers read and comment on each other's post. These components can enhance social connections for youths, helping them to meet new people and maintain existing friendship online.

The economic demands of the new global era require the development of a knowledge-based society for nation building purposes. Currently, the Malaysian workforce is mainly derived from the youth who will be the agents of change for economic and social growth of the society. On that note, the Knowledge Content in Key Economic Sectors has identified youth as the target group for ICT with the hope that their strength will steer Malaysia towards the development of K-economy and K-society on par with other countries across the globe (Tengku Nor Rizan et al. 2005).

Malaysia being an active global player in youth development is serious in confronting issues that concerned the youth locally and globally. Realizing the importance of monitoring status of youth development in Malaysia, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in line with the government's focus in the Ninth Malaysia Plan govern to enhance human capital development amongst youths in order to create first class human capital (Malaysian Youth Report 2007).

Perceived Credibility

Millions of people perform searches each day looking for a wide variety of information, including medical and health information, product and commercial

information, political and news information, as well as entertainment, travel, and many other kinds of information (Fallows 2005). The overabundance of information available online, coupled with the heavy reliance on the web by information-seekers raises the issue of the credibility or quality of information found online.

In this respect, selecting credible information from the various available resources is a challenge for anyone. The kinds of challenges may however, differ for adults and for young people. For instance, adult information seekers are likely to select information when they think it is accurate, current, objective, reliable, authoritative, trustworthy, understandable, well written, comprehensive, easy to obtain, and on topic. Youths on the other hand often mainly consider whether information is related to the topic and whether it is new, interesting, and convenient, while showing less interest in authority, the readability of the language and recency (Rieh and Hilligoss 2008).

The study about Internet credibility has drawn attention to numerous studies conducted by Bucy (2003), Eyal et al. (2003), Flanagin and Metzger (2007), Hsi-Peng Lu and Kuo-Lun Hsiao (2007), Johnson and Kaye (2004), Lankes (2008), Major and Atwood (1997), Metzger (2007), Rieh and Hilligoss (2008) Swetser et al. (2008) and Wathen and Burkell (2002). From the studies conducted specific concerns about credibility stems from the fact that Internet and digitization technologies lowered the cost of information dissemination while increasing accessibility to information. As a result, much more information is available, and more easily accessible, now than ever before.

Metzger (2005) strongly stated that the Internet has made the need to critically evaluate information more important than ever before while, at the same time, it has shifted the burden of credibility assessment and quality control of professional gatekeepers and onto individual information seekers. Developing the skills to evaluate Web-based information, then, is crucial for Internet users. She also added that, there is evidence that many people are unprepared for this responsibility, and may have trouble determining how and when to assess the credibility of online information.

As blogs are used as a source of information, their credibility becomes an important topic of study. Blogs' direct communication enables users to express their thoughts as well as reading opinions from the grassroots of political participation. Because of these unique characteristics and the different communication style, understanding users' perceived credibility of blogs compared to other media is essential.

Blogger

Stone (2002) explained that during the mid-1990s the Internet was compared to a frontier outpost where discussion was free, sometimes pointed, often blunt, and frequently rebellious. Besides, according to her, critics suggested several reasons why the Internet should be judged as a less credible source of information

than traditional media. Anyone could post information to the Internet, and these sites created by individuals spouting their views often appeared as credible as those hosted by reliable sources. Such sites lacked editorial oversight and did not have the professional and social pressures to provide accurate and unbiased information. Also, the Internet was rife with rumours and misinformation, and several parody sites, which looked like official sites, sprouted up on the Internet.

Most bloggers are not blogging in affiliation with an organization. Many bloggers don't even reveal their actual identities. With online anonymity comes little accountability for bloggers. Bloggers often just one person's opinion, they are not necessarily well research or even accurate.

Blogs do rely however, on peer review of other bloggers to point out mistakes that can be easily and prominently corrected. Users may find blogs more credible because they are independent rather than controlled by corporate interests, bloggers may discuss issues traditional media shy away from because they might hurt corporations. Blogs also run stories from around the world that were unavailable or ignored by traditional media.

Information

The Internet has lowered the cost of both disseminating and accessing information (Metzger 2007). Easy access and the lack of content editors have meant that end-users of information often need to assess for themselves the material they view. Due to the volume of information available and the lack of professional editors to monitor material, the credibility of web content typically must be assessed by the reader (Metzger 2007). This is problematic if inaccurate information is accepted at face value.

When accessing the credibility of health related online information, Eysenbach and Kohler (2002) found that people look for a professional design, scientific language, ease of use and the source of information. However, when asked after completing a search task, very few participants were able to name the website where they had eventually found information and none of them had checked any 'disclaimer' or 'about us' section of the websites they looked at. Rains (2007) studied the impact on anonymity in electronic meeting systems and found that the credibility and influence of contributors can be reduced by anonymity.

Source

Meyer (1998) defined the concept of credibility as reasonable grounds for being. Researches have studied credibility to see how much media users consider a medium believable and convincing. Usually, the credibility which is perceived by the media users refers to the media users' judgement on the source of a message and the source could be a journalist or a medium (Newhagen 1997).

The factors that affect credibility can be classified as either consumer

characteristics or source characteristics. Considering the information consumer, Flanagin and Metzger (2000) found that respondents rate the Internet as being as credible as television, radio and magazines but less credible than newspaper. Their findings also suggest that credibility depends on the type of information being disseminated. Flanagin and Metzger (2003) studied the impact of website author and website visitor gender on credibility and found out that men rate credibility significantly higher than women. This differs from the results of Johnson and Kaye (1998) who report that females found the Internet to be more credible than males with the difference perhaps being due to a confounding influence from characteristics of the web content's creator (Chesney and Su 2010).

According to Fogg et al. (2003), website credibility has been found to be higher if the person or people behind the site have a 'real world feel' by for instance including a postal address, if the website is easy to use, if the person or author behind the site itself appear to have expertise, if the site appears trustworthy and if the content is tailored to individual visitors. The genre of web content also impacts on credibility, Flanagin dan Metzger (2007) examined four types of website namely news organisation, e-commerce, special interest and personal home pages and found that credibility decreases going down the list.

In line with most other scholars' studies, credibility is considered as being something subjective to the reader, perceived credibility rather than some sort of objective measure of the source material itself. Perceived credibility seems to be assessed by a reader by evaluating multiple dimensions (Fogg et al. 2002). However, different researchers have used different dimensions. Bias, fairness, accuracy, objectivity, honesty, accountability and goodwill have all been used in credibility studies (Freeman and Spyridakis 2004; Sundar 1998) but the most consistent dimension of media credibility in studies has been believability (Flanagin and Metzger 2000).

Methodology

This study was conducted in Klang Valley. Voluntary participative sampling was employed to select the respondents in order to obtain a sample of youths within Klang Valley. A total of 252 youths in Klang Valley participated in this study. This study was conducted through survey method using a set of complete bilingual questionnaires (with Bahasa Melayu translation) which were distributed to respondents. The information obtained from the questionnaires was analysed using the SPSS for Windows version 15.0. The data was analysed using descriptive analysis. The distribution of frequency, mean and percentage were used to analyse the obtained scores for demographic variable, blogging frequencies and perceived credibility of blogs.

Findings and discussion

Table 1 showed the distribution of respondents according to personal demographic

characteristics. From a total of 252 respondents who participated in this study, 49 percent were male and 51 percent were female. Almost half (43%) of the respondents were between the age group of 20 to 22 years old while almost one third (30%) of the respondents were between 15 to 19 years old. From a total of 252 respondents, more than a quarter (27%) represented respondents aged between 23 to 25. Almost half (51%) of the respondents were Malays, (30%) were Chinese while the Indians were represented by 16% and other races represented 3%. With regard to education, one third (38%) of respondents were secondary school pupils while (34%) have attended tertiary education. From the total, 28% were diploma or certificates holders.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to demographic characteristics

	Male (n=123)	Female (n=129)	Total
	Percentage (%)	Percentage (%)	
Age (years)			
15 - 19	13	17	74
20 - 22	23	20	109
23 - 25	13	14	69
Race			
Malay	25	26	127
Chinese	16	14	78
Indian	7	9	42
Others	1	2	5
Level of Education			
Secondary School	19	19	95
Diploma/ Certificates	15	13	71
Degree or Higher	15	19	86

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to Internet usage background. The finding showed that less than two third (67%) of the respondents had Internet access at home, followed by slightly over half (50.8%) using WiFi/ Hotspot and almost one third (31%) are accessing Internet at the library. Only about 24 percent had been accessing Internet at cybercafé while 8 percent of them used Internet at their workplace. Almost half of the respondents accessed Internet from WiFi/Hotspot locations and this fact is supported by the statistics shown in the Communications and Multimedia Selected Facts and Figures Q4 2010, whereby Selangor has the highest WiFi/Hotspot locations in Malaysia with a registered number of 2,746.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to Internet usage background

	Male (n=123)	Female (n=129)	Total
	Percentage %	Percentage %	
Internet Access			
Home	34	33	169
Wi-Fi / Hotspot	22	28	128
Library	16	15	78
Cybercafé	13	11	60
Computer Lab	13	9	49
Workplace	3	5	20
Others	2	1	9
Duration of Internet Used			
1 - 3 years	11	13	60
4 - 6 years	18	22	101
7 - 9 years	10	10	49
10 years and above	10	6	42

About 40 percent of youths have four to six years of experience on the Internet while 24 percent of youths are newcomers who have one to three years of use behind them. These are followed by 20 percent have had seven to nine years' experience and 16 percent with a duration of ten years and above of using the Internet. The close percentage share of male and female duration of Internet used indicates that there is no gender divides in accessed to the Internet. In contrast, users duration of Internet used are higher for four to six years, perhaps indicating that exposure and adoption of Internet begin in earnest when youths are in secondary school. This data also supported that a majority 70 percent of youth claimed their computer skills as average while 27 percent claimed as expert.

In this study, it is apparent that less than two third (61%) of respondents have been blogging for less than a year. Almost a quarter (23%) had been blogging for one to two years and only 16 percent had been blogging for more than three years. The findings from this survey augers well with the aspiration of the National Information Technology Council (NITC) to develop the National Youth and Information Communication Technology for Development Policy. The fact that youth spend a substantial amount of their time on computer and Internet and the fact that they tend to be technologically savvy are reassuring for policy makers who believe that the demand of the new global economy requires a large workforce of knowledge workers.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to length of time blogging

Length of time blogging	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	61
1 - 2 years	23
More than 3 years	16

Youths believe the information obtained from blogs are helpful to them. About 60 percent of youths blogs for entertainment pursuit. Of these, 39 percent blogs for technology followed by 37 percent who blogs for religion aspect. 35 percent prefer family and friends while 34 percent blogs as an educational and academic tools. This includes downloading academic materials, assignments and bulletin board lectures or for undergraduate communications. A smaller 21 percent look up politic blogs matters and another 15 percent on business matters. In general, Malaysian youths who were born after 1970s grew up in the period when the country enjoyed tremendous economic growth and political stability and being youths, they are more interested in entertainment pursuits rather than political affairs.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to blog preferences

Blog Preferences	Percentage (%)
Entertainment	60
Technology	39
Religion	37
Family and Friends	35
Education and academic	34
Hobbies	32
Sports	31
Personal Diaries	28
Health	27
Gaming	24
Politics	21
Business	15
Others	2

Youth's bloggers tend to discuss the events that impact their everyday lives such as romantic interest, music, entertainment, studies and others. This resonates

with youth development that suggests youths are beginning to construct cohesive narratives of their lives in order to prepare them for the coming adulthood (Huffaker 2006). It is important for youths to share the stories of their lives containing their past, present and future events and one that they can reflect upon. This is evident with the finding in this study that quoted the personal diaries as the blog preferences where youths discussed both details of each day, their relationship with others and more reflective content of their feelings regarding these contexts.

Ironically, what qualifies as entertainment is subjective. While technology, current events and political blogs dominate the popular blog, some youths undoubtedly find blogs about computer, software and gadgets endlessly entertaining, especially since the majority are actually personal blogs like hackers, geeks and tech heads.

Blog readers appear to be avid readers, as the result indicated that 71 percent of users are basically light users spending less than six hours per week on blogs. About 18 percent spend 7 to 12 hours per week while 11 percent were blogging for more 13 hours and more per week. An average amounts of time spend blogging was 6.4 hours per week.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of blogging

Duration	Percentage (%)
1 - 6 hours	71
7 - 12 hours	18
13 hours and more	11

There is some segment of blog authors who used the space to discuss their homosexuality or even come out to the general public. These suggest that the sheer size of the Internet may produce a feeling of safety or anonymity. It is often said how it is easier to tell a stranger a personal detail or secret than an acquaintance, family member or friend. Some of these youths may be revealing things they do not ordinarily share because their blog world seems unknown or unnamed. However, a question raise the issue of are all youth aware of the consequences of revealing information online or does the sense of anonymity shadow the fact that their blogs are actually publicly-accessible.

Dunn and Goodnight (2011) claim self-disclosure is healthy. Sometimes youths just want to talk about an issue and they do not require immediate respond from anyone. They just want to let out their feelings. James Hamilton, an associate professor of psychology at the university of Alabama says, there is ample research to suggest that disclosing secrets or talking about strong emotions improves physical and psychological health. Youths are typically very concern about appearance and reputation, and these blogs and online discussions allow teenagers and children a sort of intimacy in conversation and communication

with others that preserves their anonymity in ways that face to face conversation can't (Seabol 2005). In other words, the Internet gives them a space to share information without having to provide their identity.

According to Risdahl (2006), websites are often used for one-way content publishing- such as communicating a marketing message or serving as a virtual store. Blogs are web sites with a twist. Anyone who can read and write can publish a blog and no programming experience needed. Anyone can be a star of his or her blog and build an online community. Blogging makes basic web sites look static by comparison. This is parallel with the finding of this study which clearly indicated that 31 percent of youths authored one blog, a small proportion of seven percent authored two blogs while only three percent authored more than three blogs.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to number of blogs authored

	Percentage (%)
None	59
One	31
Two	7
More than three	3

The number of blogs community each youth participated showed an alarming result as 29 percent youths belonging to one to five blogs communities. Even though only a small number of 8 percent of youths belongs to more than 10 blogs communities but this number indicates how much self-disclosure they really upload publically on the Internet.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to number of blogs communities participated

	Percentage (%)
None	57
1 – 5	29
6 - 10	6
More than 10	8

Cultivating a community on a blog takes time and it can't be forced. A blogger can enable the comments function and post for days, weeks or even months without ever receiving a single comment. Other bloggers are surprised to receive immediate chatter in their blog's comments. For some people, receiving feedback from readers, especially if it is positive, is quite gratifying. Other people may not be as comfortable reading what total strangers have to say about their blog

content, especially if the content is more personal (Risdahl 2006).

The items used to measure respondents' perceived credibility of bloggers were as listed in table 8. There were seven items in it. The overall mean value of bloggers perceived credibility was 3.31 which mean most of the respondents fell between the categories of 'not sure' and 'true'. This means most of the respondents did not totally agree that they perceived bloggers as credible.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents and mean value for the dimension of perceived credibility of bloggers

Blogger	Percentage (%)					Mean
(N=252)	1	2	3	4	5	
I perceive the writer to be credible.	2	14.3	26.2	46.8	10.7	3.50
I perceive the writer to have high integrity.	1.2	15.5	29	45.6	8.7	3.45
I perceive the writer to have a positive reputation.	4	19.4	31.7	34.1	10.7	3.28
I perceive the writer to be successful.	2.4	20.6	34.1	33.3	9.5	3.27
I perceive the writer to be trustworthy.	7.5	32.9	33.7	19.8	6	2.84
I perceive the writer to offer information of superior quality.	2	17.9	27.8	42.5	9.9	3.4
I perceive the writer have a sincere interest in important affairs.	2.4	19	25.4	42.1	11.1	3.4
Overall Blogger	**3.1**	**20**	**29.7**	**37.7**	**9.5**	**3.31**

Note: 1 = Not true at all, 2 = Not true, 3 = Not sure, 4 = True, 5 = Absolutely true

The highest value of mean of 3.50 for item 1 indicated that most of the respondent's responses were mainly concentrated at scale 4. Almost half (46.8%) of respondents admitted that it was true that they perceived bloggers to be credible while 14.3 percent answered not true to this statement. For item two which stated that respondents perceive the bloggers to have high integrity, a mean value of 3.45 indicated that more than one third (45.6%) gave the responses of true while only 15.5 percent responded as not true to it.

In general, the finding of this study indicated that youths demonstrated an obscure maturity with regard to perceived bloggers credibility. 37.7 percent admitted that it was true that they perceived bloggers as credible while 9.5 percent strongly agree the bloggers are completely credible. 29.7 percent not sure either the bloggers are credible or not, a position best described as neutral. At the other side of the scale 20 percent claimed not true on the bloggers credibility most of the time while 3.1 percent perceived the bloggers credibility as not true at all.

According to Jun-E Tan and Zawawi (2008) blogs have two potential roles to play in democratization. The first is to facilitate the civil liberties of society as a

whole and the second is to help in framing the discourse and setting the agenda for public policy-making. Not surprisingly, those who blog on general themes and socio-political bloggers exercise their freedom of expression differently. Most general bloggers wish to share and document personal experiences, whereas the socio-political bloggers do so with the explicit aim of influencing and motivating others.

Because of the ease and speed of building and posting to blogs, more people are able to publish online than ever before. The growth in the number of online publishers has increased exponentially the amount of information being distributed on the Internet. The quality of the information however has not necessarily improved. With more and more people self-publishing through blogs, there is inevitably less editorial control. The increased data and information created by blogs doesn't necessarily translate into the best quality or come from the most credible resources. Still, the mechanics of blogging has enabled an influx of information to be put online that may not have otherwise been published because on previous technology barriers.

Table 9: Distribution of respondents and mean value for the dimension of perceived credibility of information

Information	Percentage (%)					Mean
(N=252)	1	2	3	4	5	
I perceive the information in the blogs to be believable.	4.4	30.2	33.3	25.4	6.7	3.00
I perceive the information in the blogs to be accurate.	8.7	35.7	29	19.8	6.7	2.80
I perceive the information in the blogs to be trustworthy.	4.4	29.4	37.7	26.6	2	2.92
I perceive the information in the blogs to be unbiased.	7.5	36.5	31	21.4	3.6	2.77
I perceive the information in the blogs to be complete.	4.4	35.3	28.6	27.4	4.4	2.92
Overall Information	**5.9**	**33.4**	**31.9**	**24.1**	**4.7**	**2.88**

Note: 1 = Not true at all, 2 = Not true, 3 = Not sure, 4 = True, 5 = Absolutely true

The level of information in the perceived credibility of blogs was measured through five items by looking at the respondents' perception. The overall mean value of information was 2.88. In terms of responses, this means score fell between the 'not true' and 'not sure' categories which meant most of the respondents did not totally agree that they perceived information in blogs as credible.

The five items as listed in table 9 were, respondents perceive the information in the blogs to be believable, accurate, trustworthy, unbiased and complete. If the proportion of respondents who choose the answer as not true at all or not true is very high, this means the perceived credibility of information is low.

After analysing the five items of perceived credibility of information, the finding showed that youths demonstrated a lamentable maturity with regard to information gleaned from blogs. About 33.4 percent claimed that it was not true that they perceived the information's contain in blogs as credible while 5.9 percent perceived the credibility of information as not true at all. About 31.9 percent of the respondents were not sure on perceived information in blogs as credible, a stance best described as neutral. At the other side of the scale about 24.1 percent admitted that the information in blogs is credible most of the time while 4.7 percent absolutely agreed that the information in blogs is completely credible.

Table 10: Distribution of respondents and mean value for the dimension of perceived credibility of source

Source	Percentage (%)					Mean
(N=252)	1	2	3	4	5	
I always check to see who the author of the blog is.	4	15.5	25	48	7.5	3.40
I always check to see if the information is current.	3.2	11.5	19.4	54.8	11.1	3.59
I always seek out other sources to validate information I find in blogs.	2	10.3	19	52.4	16.3	3.71
I always consider whether the information is opinion or fact.	0.8	6	14.7	57.9	20.6	3.92
I always check to see that the information is complete and comprehensive.	1.6	7.5	13.1	58.7	19	3.86
Overall Source	**2.3**	**10.1**	**18.3**	**54.4**	**14.9**	**3.69**

Note: 1 = Not true at all, 2 = Not true, 3 = Not sure, 4 = True, 5 = Absolutely true

In order to measure the level of perceived credibility of source, there were five items as listed in table 10. The overall mean value of source was 3.69, which means that most of the respondents' answers were inclined towards the category of 'not sure' but slightly over half (54.4%) of the respondents answers were mainly concentrating at scale 4 which means that most of them admitted true to the perceived credibility of source in blogs.

On the aspect of source, basically youths demonstrated an admirable maturity with regard to perceived source credibility from blogs. 54.4 percent claimed that

they validate the sources and information they find in blogs while 14.9 percent absolutely agreed that the sources in blogs were perceived completely credible. At the other side of the scale, 18.3 percent not sure on the perceived source credibility. About 10.1 percent claimed that they perceived source credibility as not true most of the time while 2.3 percent perceived the credibility of source as not true at all.

Table 11: Distribution of respondents' scores according to degree of perceived credibility and its three dimensions

Dimensions	Scores	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Level
Blogger					
Low	1 – 2.33	26	10.3		
Moderate	2.34 – 3.67	143	56.7	**3.31**	**Moderate**
High	3.68 - 5	83	32.9		
Information					
Low	1 – 2.33	63	25		
Moderate	2.34 – 3.67	147	58.3	**2.88**	**Moderate**
High	3.68 - 5	42	16.7		
Source					
Low	1 – 2.33	11	4.4		
Moderate	2.34 – 3.67	104	41.3	**3.69**	**High**
High	3.68 - 5	137	54.4		
Overall					
Low	1 – 2.33	10	4		
Moderate	2.34 – 3.67	187	74.2	**3.30**	**Moderate**
High	3.68 - 5	55	21.8		

Table 11 shows the mean scores and the level of each dimension of perceived credibility inclusive of bloggers, information and source. The overall score for perceived credibility was obtained from the 17 items answered by the respondents. From a total of 252 youths, almost three quarter (74.2%) perceived blogs credibility as moderate, one fifth (21.8%) perceived blogs credibility as high and only 4 percent perceived blogs credibility as low. The mean score of 3.69 for the dimensions of source was high, while the mean scores of bloggers and the information was between 3.31 and 2.88 at the moderate level. The overall level of perceived blogs credibility is at moderate level with a mean score of 3.30.

Identifying exactly one specific type of blogger is difficult. Bloggers represent

a diverse cross-section of the online population, and while they are popular blog topics, no two bloggers are exactly alike. The variety of voices, experiences and perspectives is one of the qualities that give blogs widespread appeal. Blogging gives amateurs both exposure and credibility, particularly if their work is of high quality. For many writers or aspiring writers, publishing online is a dream comes true because there are no editors. Being able to publish what they want, when they want and how they want is an attractive proposition, especially to writers who have had experience with being over edited.

The world feels smaller because of the Internet and blogs only enhance that feeling. Is blogging a trend? A decade ago, some people thought that the Internet and the World Wide Web were passing trends but they have become an integral part of our lives, the way we access and distribute information and the way we interact with one another.

Conclusions

Blogs have reinvigorated the Internet. Often more personal than regular websites, blogs are also commonly updated on a regular and even frequent basis. Websites increased the need for more information quickly, but blogs have raised the bar even higher, more current information, more references to other sites and blogs, more archival data, more content overall, more publishers. More of course, doesn't always mean better. There is an even greater need to watch out for the downside of an ever-expanding blogosphere.

Blogs have broken down some of the parameters of what is publishable and what is public. With blogs, it seems as if anything goes. Communication seems to be more open, but conflicts can also be more common. Privacy can be invaded in ways we may never have anticipated and often the actual perpetrator will lead to violation of privacy.

Although some fake blogs can be harmless, some bloggers could create such blogs with malicious intent and potentially negative consequences. A good rule overall is to do additional research, online or offline that goes beyond blogs to verify information you come across on any blogs.

Blogs can introduce stress, anxiety and other negative emotions into our life. Understanding on how to set the tone in blogs is the key in trying to maintain a blogging environment that best suits individual needs, personality and stress tolerance level. Blogs are a great forum where people can express themselves, explore issues and frontiers, but they can't replace other forms of communication. As people, we need diverse outlets. While blogs can seem attractive and safe, they are not always the ideal way to communicate with others particularly those close to you.

There is a crucial need to examine the information youth post in their blogs, including the disclosure of personal information such as name or location. The subject matter that these blogs divulge and blog characteristics might foster social interaction beyond the control of an adult supervision. According to Huffaker

(2006), on the Internet, where gender may be neutral and the body is invisible, youths create a fantastic identity by presenting themselves differently as contrast to the reality world. They discuss the mundane realities such as school or music, personal details such as romantic relationships and even sexual preference. The question here is, are Malaysian youths mature enough to consider the potential consequences of revealing certain information online?

Samsudin (2008) points out that development communication has had a long experience dealing with development issues involving adults. Young people have different needs and problems. They are in transition from childhood to adulthood. The transition period can be disastrous for youth is it experiences fracture of failure. As such, efforts should be made to create the avenue for young people to be productive and responsible human resources for a country's development. Productive human resources need to have the right attitudes and values for development. In this case, the role of development communication is to harness the potential of youth by providing a conducive environment to create an appropriate youth culture, vibrant to the socioeconomic needs of the country.

The future of the youth is very important for the country. In order to move forward, Malaysian needs youth who portrays the Malaysian identity of being competitive, have voluntary spirit, patriotic, solidarity and also involved in the political process. In order to develop the potential for youth, the Malaysian government has embarked on a multidimensional approach to youth development. The emphasis on multilevel social interactive programs within the context of the National Youth Policy. The Malaysian government has placed special emphasis on the training of its youth. The numerous programs and the budget allocated for the programs are strong indicators of the government's commitment toward developing the potential of the country's human resources because youth development is an investment necessity.

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