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EGYPTIAN BLOGS: A NEW SOCIAL SPACE



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INFORMATION REPORT

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Egyptian community is experiencing many national and international changes in different fields, so the Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) publishes a periodic series of informational reports. Each report addresses an issue of interest to Egyptian society aiming to highlight different aspects of the issue at hand. For this purpose, it states basic information that enables impartial discussion of the topic, recognizing the importance of allowing a holistic discussion of public issues based on verified evidence and information.

IDSC hopes that the series of reports will contribute to presenting a comprehensive picture to decision-makers and society at large about the issue subject of study. Ultimately, the Center aims to enrich the formulation of public policy and to lend discussions of public issues a higher level of objectivity, credibility, and transparency.

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Introduction

The internet has empowered a large number of users to blog on whatever subject they like through remarks, articles, ideas, dialogues and interactive comments supported by other content. Web pages have granted people access to a private sphere where they can publish or share with others their opinions, news and comments in a sort of journal that has come to be known as a blog.

Blogs started to emerge in their current form in 1996, when American software developer Dave Winer launched his site dedicated to writing news and posting relevant reactions and comments on a wide range of issues^[1]. The term "web log," later shortened to blog, actually entered the lexicon in December 1997 when the American writer John Barger gave the name to this type of site^[2]. Numerous similar web sites were developed and continue to multiply, no longer restricted to a certain country but rather becoming global. As blogs have proliferated, they have grown diverse and become a phenomenon that attracts a large number of youth. At the same time, they provide a rich arena where knowledge and news are shared and public opinion is formed.

In Egypt there was limited interest in blogs until 2001, when the number of Egyptian blogs started to grow each year, providing youth with a refuge where they could easily express themselves and their beliefs without restrictions. Blogs proved an effective means for digital communication among a large number of segments of the public who were not acquainted with each other outside the cyber world. Thus, blogging attracted the new generation of politicians, authors and journalists interested in collaborating either as readers or writers. In this regard, blogs evolved into an outlet for the expression of opinion, talents and interests, for venting feelings and desires and for sharing knowledge. It was to be expected that the Egyptian blogging movement would interact with current events in the Egyptian and Arab public spheres from 2005 to the present time. From 2006 to 2008, a number of demonstrations and expressions of real political protest were associated in one way or another with cyber-protests on the internet, tapping into the massive public mobilization of youth on political blogs. There followed a degree of confusion between blogging and rumors both on the part of bloggers and readers. Thus, in recent years, Egyptian blogs have grown on a wider scale, creating a new virtual community that enjoys quite strong social, cultural and political impact on the real society.

In the absence of relevant, accurate data about blogging, there arose simplistic conceptions that dismissed the phenomenon as a way to spend leisure time and circulate rumors. Such perceptions found an audience among governmental agencies and a large segment of the public. For that reason, IDSC initiated a study on this phenomenon as part of the project titled "The Blogosphere in Egypt" implemented within IDSC's work plan in January 2008. The project aims to study the Egyptian blogosphere in terms of its importance in strengthening democracy and the information society.

This report stands as the first output of the project. It was designed to provide the reader with a general framework of basic knowledge about blogs, their importance, the scope of their spread, their characteristics and their contents on one hand, and bloggers' characteristics and interests on the other. For this purpose, the report is divided into four sections: 1. the significance of blogs and the appearance of the blogosphere on the global level; 2. main features of Egyptian blogs; 3. a content analysis of these blogs; and 4. discerning the special characteristics of Egyptian bloggers.

^[1] Diane J. Schiano, Bonnie A. Nardi, Michelle Gumbrecht and Luke Swartz, **Blogging by the Rest of Us**, CHI 2004, Late Breaking Results Paper, 24-29 April, Vienna, Austria, P. 114.

^[2] Susan C. Herring, Lois Ann Scheidt, Sabrina Bonus, and Elijah Wright, **Bridging the Gap: A Genre Analysis of Weblogs**, Proceedings of the 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences – 2004, p.1.

Important Facts

- Blogs are defined as web pages that contain a record of information and posts published in a chronological order. Content includes text, images, programs and audio files that are targeted at a specific audience.
- Blogs serve as important tools in creating a democracy-based information society. However, the blogosphere has witnessed a degree of confusion between information and rumor.
- Strengths that are simultaneously weaknesses of blogs are: a lack of oversight, without interference from any controlling agency, direct between bloggers and the audience and freedom from control. As such, blog contents can raise political and ethical concerns.
- Until 1996, the world was unfamiliar with blogs. Currently, blogging attracts more than 50 million users. According to data from April 2007, the number of blogs worldwide has reached 70 million.
- The number of new blogs worldwide grew from 12,000 per day in October 2004 to 120,000 per day in April 2007, a tenfold increase. This amounts to launching 84 new blogs per minute or 1.4 blogs per second.
- The number of posts worldwide leapt from 400,000 per day in October 2004 to 1.4 million in April 2007.
- The Japanese language ranked first among languages used in blogs, as reflected in the 25.9 million blogs developed in that language, representing 37% of all blogs worldwide. Ranking second were English-language blogs comprising 36%.
- 700,000 blogs have been launched in Persian, placing that language among the top ten blogging languages worldwide.
- Arabic is not among the top ten blogging languages. The number of Arabic blogs comes to around 490,000 representing 0.7% of all blogs worldwide.
- By April 2008, the number of Egyptian blogs came to 160,000 representing 30.7% of Arab blogs, and 0.2% of international blogs. Active Egyptian blogs constitute 48.3% and the number of Egyptian bloggers is more than 162,200, most of whom are in the 20-30 age group.
- 79.2% of Egyptian blogs are created and maintained in Egypt, with 20.8% created and maintained in other countries. Among Egyptian blogs, 82.1% originate from Cairo, 11% originate from Lower Egypt and 6.8% from Upper Egypt.
- The blogging movement in Egypt and worldwide experienced rapid growth in 2005 and 2006.
- Blogging around the world is influenced by international events, whereas Egyptian blogging is more interactive with local events and issues. The total number of visitors to the majority of Egyptian blogs is less than 10,000.
- Egyptian blogs can be classified by content as follows: 30.7% variety, 18.9% political, 15.5% personal, 14.4% business and culture, 7% religious and 4.8% social. Only 4% of Egyptian blogs are focused on science and modern technology.
- 67.8% of Egyptian blogs are published in Arabic, with the majority mixing colloquial and classical. 9.5% are published in English and 20.8% are published bi-lingually.
- Content analysis of blogs revealed the most frequently mentioned public figures. Of the top ten, six were political figures, three were cultural and only one was religious. Overall, 41.6% were cultural figures and 19% were political figures. As for the percentage of male to female, 84.8% of the public figures were male compared with 10.9% female.

Section 1

The Blogging Phenomenon

1. Blogs and blogging

- Blogs are defined as web pages that contain a record of information and posts published in a chronological order. Content includes text, images, programs and audio files that are aimed at a particular target audience. In many cases, blog content will be of a personal nature. Only a few blogs maintain a commercial nature focusing on certain commodities or services; these tend to be produced by institutions, companies or agencies hoping to tap into the blogging phenomenon for marketing purposes.
- Usually the blogger is in charge of updating the content on a daily basis. "blogging" here refers to all of a blogger's activities including writing text, posting replies to readers' comments, and uploading images and audio files. Bloggers also maintain a blog roll (a listing of websites that often appear as links on weblogs) as well as an archive with recommended articles. The blog provides its content for reading, viewing and sharing for a limited audience of internet users who interact with the published information, opinions and other material either by reading or posting comments. This audience is referred to as blog readers.

2. Blogs and the virtual community

Blogs represent an important and influential medium in the virtual community as they enjoy characteristics that distinguish them from other web sites, specifically:

- **Interactivity of knowledge production and circulation**
Blogs provide an opportunity for interactive contributions to the knowledge flow within the blogosphere. Thus, readers have access to the informational posts that stimulate their contribution.
- **A rich arena for self-expression and developing a sense of empowerment** ^[1].
Bloggers, using posts, are enabled to express their inner feelings and opinions, receiving feedback. In this way the bloggers will have their voices heard by a large audience. This offers an immense feeling of self realization, fame and control over one's life.
- **Ease and speed of blogging and updating that does not require sophisticated technical expertise**

The majority of bloggers have university-level education. Nevertheless, blogging does not necessarily require specialized knowledge. New programs have enabled a simple and rapid blogging process.

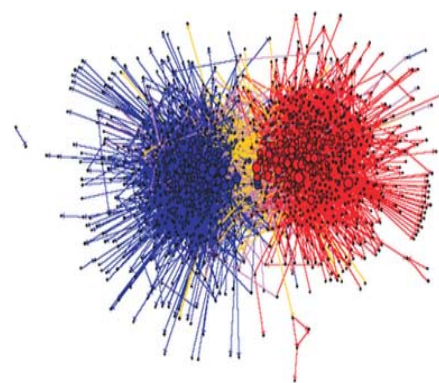
- **Primary reliance on text**
Text serves as the main raw material of blogging, neglecting the importance of other media including images, video and programs.
- **Communication with others and the creation of virtual communities sharing common interests**
Blogs provide an opportunity for effective communication for a certain group of people sharing common interests and hobbies either among themselves or with others. Other incentives include the option of revealing one's real identity and posting under pseudonyms ^[2].



Source: <http://www.cohnwolfe.com>

- The weblog's greatest strength - its uncensored, unmediated, uncontrolled voice - is also its greatest weakness. As such, the content of blogs raise political and ethical concerns.

Source: http://www.rebeccablood.net/handbook/excerpts/weblog_ethics.html



Source: <http://www.frankmccown.blogspot.com>

- Until 1996, the world was unfamiliar with blogging activity. Currently, blogging attracts more than 50 million users. 84 blogs are created every minute.

^[1] Ibid.P.8

^[2] Patchareporn Pluempavarn and Niki Panteli, The creation of social identity, through weblogging, University of Bath, School of Management, Working Paper Series , 10/2007,PP.2-3.

3. Current situation of blogs worldwide

- According to April 2007 Technorati data, the total number of blogs worldwide has reached 70 million. The total had grown by 22.8% since November 2006.
- Data show a continuous increase in the blog arena. The number of new blogs increased from 12,000 per day in October 2004 to 120,000 per day in April 2007. This translates into a tenfold increase. In other words, 84 blogs are created per minute or 1.4 blogs per second.
- Blog posts (updates with text, comments, or other content) increased from 400,000 per day in October 2004 to 1.4 million in April 2007. This represents a 250% increase. According to the data, blogging doubled every six months over a period of 42 months. As such, the area of blogging grew 60 times more than three years earlier.
- Although new blogs continue to be launched at an accelerating rate, it should be noted that the percentage of blogs that were actively maintained declined to 65% of the total as of October 2004. During 2005 and 2006 the active portion shrank further to 55%; by April 2007, the percentage had decreased to 50.5%.
- The declining general trend in the percentage of active blogs may be attributed to the volatile nature of the blogging arena. The escalating attraction for new youth entrants is counterbalanced by users who turn to other activities either within the virtual or real society.

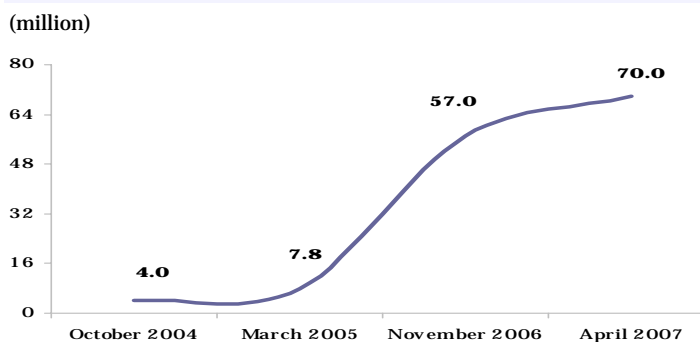
General characteristics of blogs in the world (October 2004-April 2007)

Date	Total blogs (million)	Number of new blogs / day (thousand)	Number of daily posts (thousand)	Active blogs* (%)
October 2004	4	12	400	65
March 2005	7.8	35	500	55
November 2006	57	100	1300	55
April 2007	70	120	1400	50.5

*Active blogs are those that were updated at least once during the past three months.
Source: Table created based on reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb/>

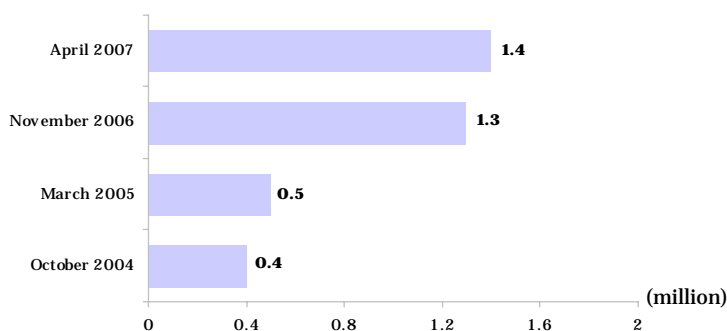
- Blogs are instrumental in building an information society based on democracy. However, blogging involves some confusion between knowledge and rumors.

Growth of the number of blogs worldwide (2004-2007)



Source: The graph was created based on reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb/>

Development of daily blogging worldwide (2004-2007)



Source: The graph was created based on reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb/>

- According to 2006 Technorati data, 11% of internet users worldwide, or 50 million people, are regular blog readers. Although the number of blogs is growing concurrently with the massive number of internet users worldwide, which recently reached 1.4 billion^[1], the percentage who regularly read blogs may be half of Technorati's estimate. Taking the available data into consideration, the percentage of blog readers can be estimated at 3.6% of all internet users worldwide.
- Technorati's survey, conducted in November 2006, ranked 12 blogs among the top 100 sites worldwide; by March 2007, the list included 22 blogs.

4. International languages used in blogging

- In 2007, the number of commonly used blogging languages increased to 100, among which the top 10 includes seven European languages and three Asian – namely, Japanese, Chinese and Persian. Arabic was absent from the list.
- Japanese maintains the largest share of worldwide blogs, amounting to 25.9 million, equivalent to 37% of worldwide blogs. This represents an advance of 4 percentage points in comparison to the previous year 2006. English-language blogs come second with a 36% share, which is 3 percentage points lower than the previous year. It is apparent that English and Spanish are the two international languages that have crossed geographic borders the most and are more global languages based on consistency of postings through a 24 hour period. Other top languages, specifically Japanese and Chinese, which ranked third with an 8% share and Italian, securing fourth position with a 3% share, are more geographically correlated. Other European languages including Spanish (3%), Russian (2%), French (2%), Portuguese (2%) and German (1%) took the fifth through ninth positions, respectively, at the international level.
- Persian ranked 10th as the language used on 1% of blogs worldwide. This implies that at least 700,000 blogs use the Persian language. The total number of internet users in Iran amounts to 18 million, representing 27.5% of the country's population^[2]. The Persian language entered the top 10 list of blogging languages in October 2006. This advance was the result of the newsworthy events that took place in the Middle East during the summer of 2006. Political events, in particular, dominated the Persian blogging movement. This correlation suggests the important role that blogs play in current affairs in the modern world.
- As for other languages, including Arabic, together they represented only 5% of the total number of worldwide blogs.

- The Japanese language ranked first in terms of blogging as reflected in the 25.9 million blogs developed in that language, representing 37% of blogs worldwide.

Blog distribution by language worldwide in 2007

Rank	Language	Total blogs (%)
1	Japanese	37
2	English	36
3	Chinese	8
4	Italian	3
5	Spanish	3
6	Russian	2
7	French	2
8	Portuguese	2
9	German	1
10	Persian	1
11	Others	5

Source: Table developed based on reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb>

- Arabic language is not among the top ten blogging languages worldwide.

- Almost 700,000 blogs use the Persian language, which is among the most 10 commonly used blogging languages worldwide.

^[1] Based on Internet World Stats, :<http://www.internetworldstats.com/af/eg.htm>

^[2] <http://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#ir>

5. Arab blogs

- Although many Arab youth are experiencing robust interaction within the virtual world, impressions are insufficient to judge the blogging volume in the Arab world. Furthermore, accurate statistics are scarce in that field. However, Technorati's survey of the most commonly used blogging languages indicates a decreased number of blogs using Arabic. Granted, there are Arab blogs published in other languages, but they are very few in number.
- The total number of Arab blogs is smaller than Persian blogs. This is consistent with data indicating the lower number of internet users in the Arab world - 31.8 million, representing 9.7% of the total Arab population^[1]. By comparison, the number of internet users in Iran is triple the total of internet users in Arab countries.
- Several attempts were made to count Arab blogs including that conducted by "The Jordan Planet Aggregator." It estimated the number of Arab blogs at the end of 2006 to be 7,000. Similar attempts were made including the estimate of the Regional Aggregator of Arab blogs that covers Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia^[2].
- It was noted, though, that the trend of Arab blogging grew in recent years concurrently with the emergence of Arab blogging domains including Maktoob and Jeeran. These domains contributed to the increase in the number of Arab blogs, while the availability of free blogging on non-Arab domains such as Blogspirit, Wordpress and Blogspot helped in further promoting blogging. There are at least 75 domains hosting Arab blogs broken down into 19 domains and 56 web sites, used as domains for Arab blogging. Needless to say, the Arab blogging movement is chaotic as a result of the absence of mechanisms to effectively monitor, organize and activate this movement in the manner seen in developed countries
- The project "The Blogosphere in Egypt" attempted to estimate the number of Arab blogs based on a sample drawn from all the available blogging domains on April 10, 2008. The sample size was 1,254 blogs. Based on direct browsing and analysis of the profile contents of all blogs included in the sample, it was revealed that 30.7% are Egyptian. According to the count conducted by "The Blogosphere in Egypt" Project, the number of Egyptian blogs reached 160,000 on April 22, 2008 ^[3]. The sample showed that 69.3% of Arab blogs are created by bloggers from different Arab countries other than Egypt. Thus, the total number of Arab blogs, including the Egyptian ones plus Arab blogs using other languages ^[4] comes to 490,000 which is equivalent to 0.7% of worldwide blogs.

- 120,000 blogs are created daily around the world, or 5040 blogs per hour. Which means 1.4 blogs per second.

Source: <http://www.technorati.com>

- The number of posts worldwide leapt from 400,000 per day in October 2004 to 1.4 million in April 2007.

Source: <http://www.technorati.com>



<http://www.lachyab.jeeran.com/>

- The number of Arab blogs comes to 490,000, representing about 0.7% of the total number of blogs worldwide.
- The percentage of Egyptian blogs among all Arab blogs comes to 30.7% and does not exceed 0.2% of the total of blogs worldwide

^[1] According to Internet World Stats. See: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/af/eg.htm>

^[2] Marc Lynch, *Blogging the New Arab Public*, p.2

^[3] See Section 2 of this report on the estimation of the number of Egyptian blogs.

^[4] "The Blogosphere in Egypt" Project estimated the number of Arabic blogs published in other languages to be 10,000

Section 2

Characteristics of The Egyptian Blogs

1. Identification criteria of Egyptian blogs

■ Blogging is free of oversight, which makes it easy for any person to create his or her own blog. As such, the blogger is not even obliged to complete the profile page with accurate personal information including his or her home country. Blogging in Egypt suffers a chaotic environment and the lack of a credible regulating mechanism in charge of monitoring the trend. Thus, it is impossible to evaluate Egyptian blogs except by using a number of direct and indirect criteria, as follows:

- Personal and nationality data posted voluntarily on bloggers' profiles.
- The social and cultural content of posts including language, vocabulary and uploaded pictures, as well as the issues and topics of public interest in specific countries that are raised for discussion.
- Other electronic indicators can be derived from international sites such as Technorati, Alexa and others. Such indicators may provide data on the international classification of blogs such as:
 - Number of visitors from different regions of the world.
 - Number of hits (page views).
 - Number of daily posts, readers' comments, and updating processes run from specific regions around the world, along with other varied indicators.
- Other blogging aggregators and domains provide statistics and data related to breakdown by country, such as Maktoob, Jeeran, Blogger, Tadween, Arabo.com, Al Shamel and others.
- In this report, the identification of Egyptian blogs relied on content analysis of available data on blogs. It also relied on analyzing the blogs' social and cultural content as well as the statistics on Egyptian blogs derived from blogging aggregators and domains. At present, IDSC is in the process of cooperating with Technorati and Alexa to identify additional electronic data on Egyptian blogs. Forthcoming reports generated from the project will provide such data.

Blogs distribution by main domains

Domain	Number of blogs	(%)
Albawaba	1371	0.86
Jeeran	116192	72.53
Katib	78	0.05
Maktoob	10523	6.57
Blogspirit	21	0.01
Blogspot	26100	16.29
Egyblogs	66	0.04
Others	5848	3.65
Total	160000	100

Source: Table developed based on reports published on:

<http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb>

- The number of Egyptian blogs, as of April 2008, amounted to 160,000 hosted on 75 domains.

- Egyptian blogs represent 30.7% of all Arab blogs and 0.2% of blogs worldwide.

2. Estimating the number of Egyptian blogs

- It was a difficult task to estimate the number of Egyptian blogs because of missing systematic archiving and accurate directories of relevant blogs. Nevertheless, the IDSC project on "The Blogosphere in Egypt" attempted to generate an estimate based on a comprehensive and accurate review of all domains, platforms, aggregators and web sites that might host Egyptian blogs according to the previously mentioned criteria.
- Consequently, it was found that no fewer than 75 blogging domains host Egyptian blogs. These sources vary in terms of the availability and quality of data which led us to depend on statistics from the seven main domains included in the table. The number of Egyptian blogs hosted on those domains was estimated on April 22, 2008 to be 154,152.
- On the other 12 domains and 56 web sites used as domains, the IDSC ran a comprehensive survey for Egyptian blogs, using direct and intensified browsing, to find that the number of Egyptian blogs came to 5,848. Thus, the total number of Egyptian blogs hosted on all domains that were monitored is around 160,000.

3. Virtual and Geographic Distribution of Blogs

3.1 Virtual

Egyptian blogs are not centered in one location, but rather spread from either a virtual or geographic perspective. Virtually, 96.3% are centered on four main blogging domains, broken down into three Arab – namely Jeeran, Maktoob and Albawaba – and the international Blogspot or Blogger (affiliated with Google). The rest of the blogs, representing 3.7%, are distributed on 71 blogging domains and web sites. The following section introduces the share of each main domain of Egyptian blogs:

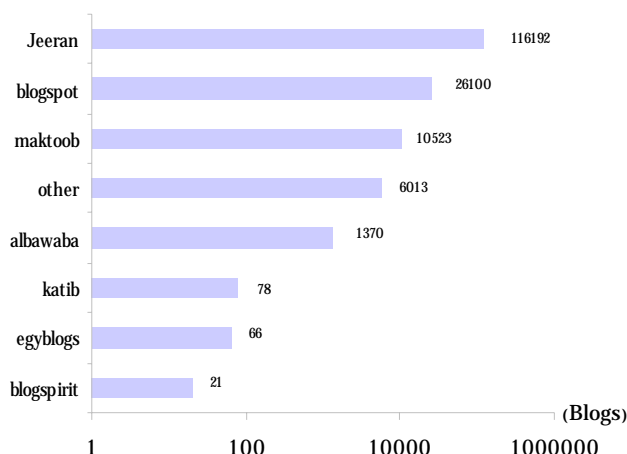
- Jeeran has the largest number of Egyptian blogs - 116,192, representing 72.6% of the total
- Blogspot is next, hosting 26,100 Egyptian blogs and comprising 16.3% of the total.
- Maktoob ranks third hosting 10,325 Egyptian blogs and comprising 6.5% of the total.
- Albawaba ranked fourth, hosting 1371 Egyptian blogs, or 0.9% of the total.

3.2 Geographic

Accurate data on the governorates and areas where blogs originate are unavailable. Blogging domains fail to provide such data simply because bloggers are not compelled to complete profile fields. Thus, it becomes difficult to identify the Egyptian blogs' geographic range by governorates. However, some blogging domains such as Blogspot offer abundant information regarding the bloggers' place of residence as part of their profile. In some cases, bloggers willingly insert such information.

For this purpose, two regular random samples were drawn; the first included 1,185 Egyptian blogs registered on Blogspot. It aimed to record bloggers' locations nationwide based on other information recorded on the profile on all Egyptian blogs hosted on Blogspot* - a total of 26,100. The second was also a regular random sample of 1,312 Egyptian blogs drawn from different blogging domains. The outputs of the two samples are as follows:

Distribution of Egyptian blogs by blogging domains

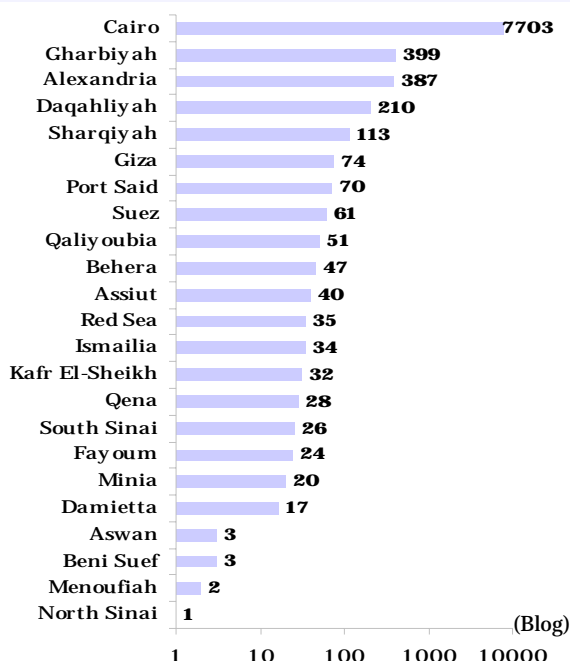


Source: Table developed based on reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb>

96.3% of the Egyptian blogs are hosted on Jeeran, Maktoob, Albawaba and Blogspot.

3.7% of the Egyptian blogs are distributed among 17 less popular domains.

Distribution of Egyptian blogs by governorate according to monitoring count on Blogspot in April 20, 2008



The following source was used for recording the information: <http://www.blogger.com/profile-find.g?t=l&loc0=EG>

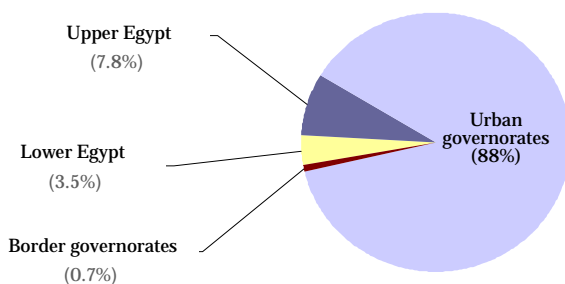
* The following source was used for recording the information: <http://www.blogger.com/profile-find.g?t=l&loc0=EG>

- The follow-up monitoring count of the Blogspot sample of Egyptian blogs showed that the total number of blogs that accurately revealed the blogger's identity amounted to 11,850 of the total. That translates to 47.2% compared to 52.8% that had no location information.
- Blogspot hosts a total of 9,380 Egyptian blogs created and maintained from Egypt (79.2%). There are 2,470 Egyptian blogs created and maintained from abroad (20.8%).
- Egyptian blogs posted outside Egypt are maintained in various locations around the world, notably Egyptian expatriates living in Arabian Gulf countries in addition to the children of Egyptian immigrants living in Europe, the U.S.A. and Canada.
- Blogs posted in Egypt are spread around 23 governorates with varied percentages.
- The spread of blogs from a geographic perspective experiences a constant increase nationwide. It might even change on a daily basis. When IDSC started the follow-up monitoring count on Blogspot one week before the actual count, the number of blogs in some governorates kept fluctuating. For example, Alexandria maintained second position after Cairo, in terms of the number of blogs, until Gharbiya took a surprise leap during the three days before April 20 to take over the second rank.
- The majority of Egyptian bloggers are Cairenes, with an 82.12% share of all Egyptian blogs. This result is to be expected, given the large population in general and of youth in particular. Cairo enjoys an infrastructure in the fields of communications, internet services and computer use, coupled with a large middle class characterized by dynamic interaction with events, leisure time and openness to the world.
- 8,250 blogs originate from urban governorates, representing 88% of the total.
- Lower Egypt's governorates are more interested in blogging as indicated by a 729 blogs representing 7.8%.
- Upper Egypt's share of blogs did not exceed 334, with a percentage of 3.5%.
- Border governorates rank at the end of the list, as only 67 blogs originate from there constituting 0.7%. Most of the locations are centered in the touristic areas of the Red Sea and South Sinai.

■ For the sample of 1,312 Egyptian blogs, RSS automatic reading technology was used to copy their contents and upload them in a database for analysis. The results of the content analysis revealed that only 440 blogs (33.3%) provided data in the location field of the profile. That was 14 percentage points lower than the larger sample from Blogspot. The most important results are as follows:

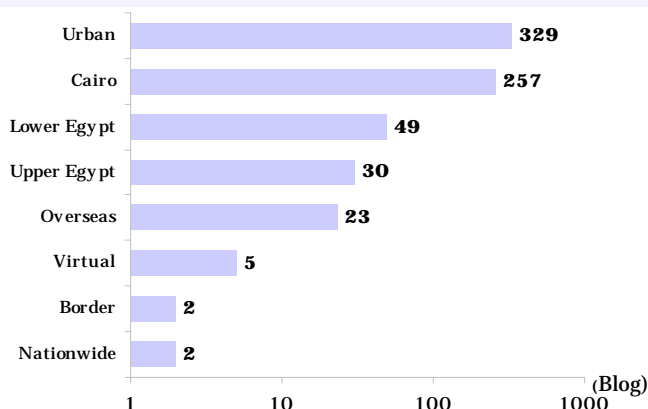
- Urban governorates recorded the highest percentage of Egyptian blogs, constituting 74.8%; within that share, the majority, 78.1% were in Cairo. Cairo came at the top of all the governorates, representing 58.4% of the blog sample.
- Lower Egypt's governorates came second in terms of originating blogs, scoring 11.1%, followed by Upper Egypt's with 6.8%.
- The share of Egyptian blogs posted abroad was only 5.2%. It was also observed that the location field, in a limited number of blogs, refer to Egypt, as do some pseudonyms such as: Land of Pharos, Spacious Land of Allah, Mother of the World, and others.

Egyptian blogs inside Egypt by areas, according to the follow-up monitoring count on Blogspot , April 20, 2008



The following source was used for recording the information:
<http://www.blogger.com/profile-find.g?t=l&loc0=EG>

Egyptian blog distribution by blogging location based on a sample of Egyptian blogs – April 2008

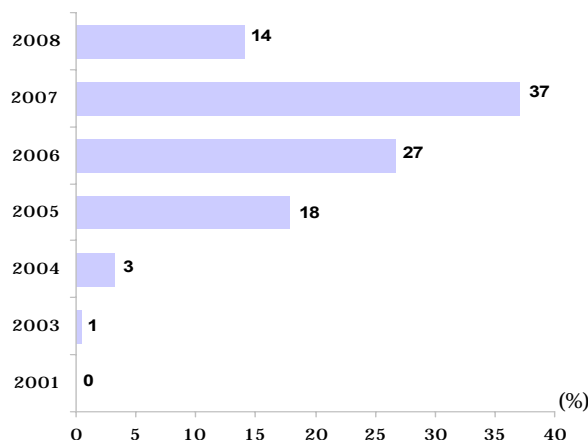


Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database ,IDSC, 2008

4. Development of blogging in Egypt

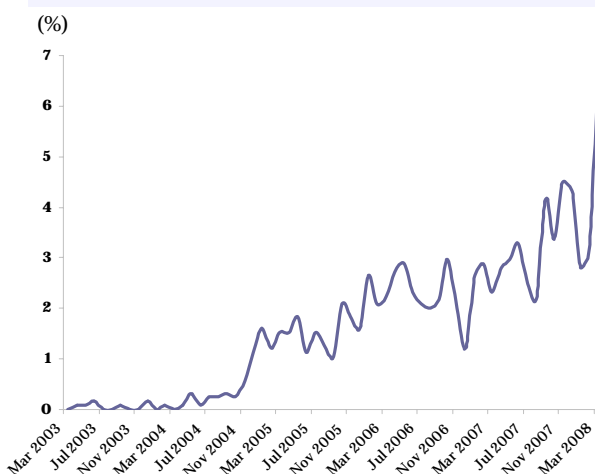
- Internet users were initially introduced to blogs at the end of the 1990s particularly by those who used English in blogging. Since 2000, Egypt's internet services have experienced a notable improvement supported by high speed links that allowed the use of the Arabic language in blogging.
- Analysis of a sample of Egyptian blogs illuminated a number of observations related to the escalating annual growth of the number of blogs, as follows:
 - Until late 2004, blogging volume remained limited, amounting to at most 3% of the total sample.
 - The number of newly created blogs, expressed in terms of the sample, leapt from 3% in 2004 to 18% in 2005.
 - The percentage of newly created blogs continued to rise in 2006 to reach about 27%, a difference of 9% compared to the year before.
 - Blog demand increased until the percentage of newly created reached 37% in 2007, a difference of 11% compared to the year before.
 - The percentage of new blogs during the first four months of 2008 scored 14.2% of the total sample. Assuming that the general trend will sustain this level, it is projected that percentage of new blogs could amount to 42.6% by the end of the year.

Number of blogs by development date from 2001 to present



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database ,IDSC, 2008

Percentage of new Egyptian blogs: March 2003 – March 2008

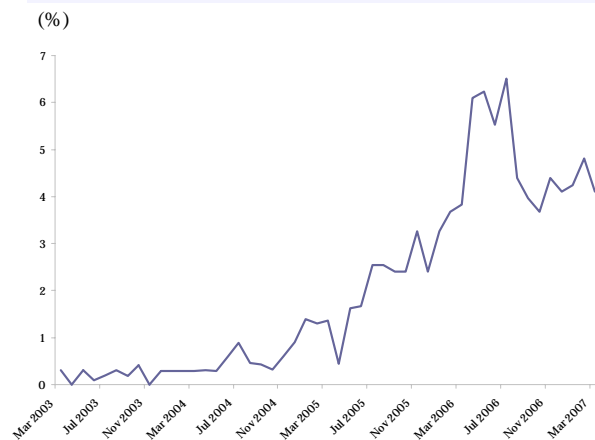


Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database ,IDSC, 2008

5. Egyptian blogging movement within local and international contexts

- Studying the general trend of Egyptian blogs, one will observe a continuous rise in their number. This indicates increased blogging demand either on the part of bloggers or blog readers. However, the time series March 2003-March 2007 indicates fluctuations between different months.
- Regarding the number of blogs, over the period of 49 months, at least eight months witnessed a significant rise: December 2004; January, May and October 2005; and February, April, May and October 2006. This suggests that public events and issues in 2005 and 2006 served as the real driving force behind blogging activity. Over these two years, crucial events took place, such as constitutional amendments, President Mubarak's election to a new term, elections to the People's Assembly, a crisis among Sudanese refugees, a ferry sinking, and sectarian conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Alexandria. Other regional incidents gained public interest as well, including tension in Gaza and the bloody strife in Iraq.

Percentage of blogs according to the creating date worldwide



Source: Graph based on reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb/>

- The impact of the previously mentioned events could be easily seen in the content of many blogs, particularly political blogs. Even if blogs are not of a political nature per se, nevertheless, political events can create a temporary momentum in the blogosphere; then the focus will switch to other interests. Such a pattern was confirmed in responses from a large number of bloggers interviewed in the field as part of the “Blogosphere in Egypt” project.
- A look at the worldwide blogging movement reveals a number of similarities and differences with Egypt's.
- On a worldwide level, the number of blogs is constantly increasing, which means that the growing demand for blogging represents a globalized phenomenon rather than a local or regional one. To confirm this point, the time period March 2003-March 2007 indicates similar fluctuations.
- During five of the above mentioned months - July, August and November 2005, April and May 2006 - there was a notable rise in the number of blogs worldwide each day. This implies world events occurred during 2005 and 2006 that engaged worldwide public opinion. Such events affected blogging as well. The same trend applies to the Egyptian blogging situation. According to the Technorati report, the tsunami disaster and the war in Iraq stood as the most crucial powerful events that steered the global blogosphere^[1].
- Comparing the differences between two time series for both Egyptian and international blogs, based on the percentage of the number of newly created blogs each month, one sees significant variation between the Egyptian

■ Egyptian and worldwide blogging are experiencing and escalating growth. The general trend of both recorded a notable rise during 2005 and 2006.

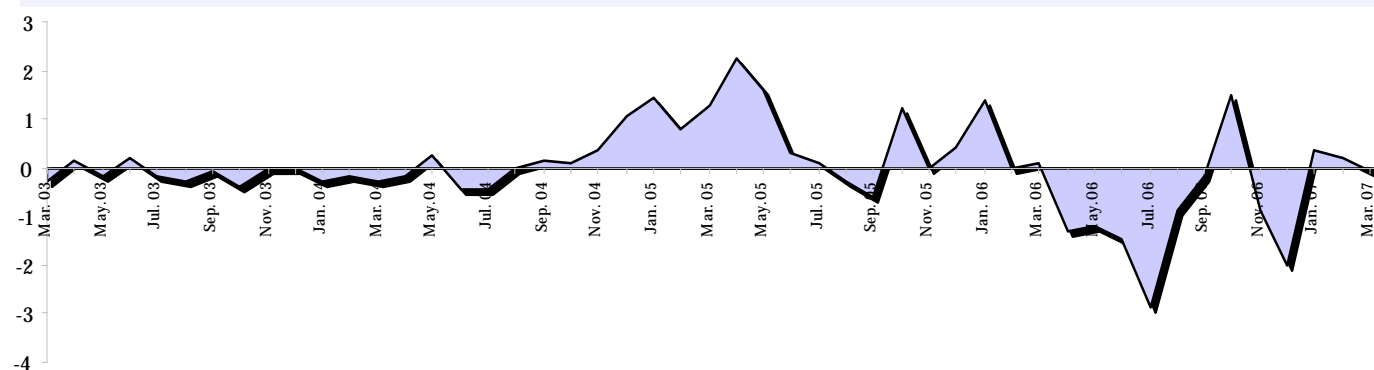
■ Global blogosphere is affected by international events; Egyptian blogging reacts to the local issues and events.

and international blogosphere. The following graph shows a separating line on the time series March 2003-March 2007 with the area above the horizontal axis depicting the growth of Egyptian blogging, and the area below the horizontal axis depicting the growth of blogging internationally.

- Accordingly, positive values above the horizontal axis indicate that Egyptian blogs grew at a higher rate than their international counterparts at different time points. Negative values below the horizontal axis indicate that Egyptian blogs' growth rate fell below that of international blogs. In other words, surge periods for international blogging differ from that of Egyptian blogging. According to the analysis reported by Technorati on the state of blogosphere interaction with current events, evidence shows that international events strongly affect blogging in general worldwide. Such events motivate a large number of bloggers to express their relevant opinions as they create new blogs. Egyptian blogs mostly appeal to the majority of Egyptians by responding to local changes and events.

[1] Please review the reports published on: <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb/>

Relative differences between the growth of Egyptian and international blogs from March 2003-March 2007



Source: Graph based on data derived from the IDSC's Database of the Blogosphere in Egypt, 2008, as well as <http://www.sifry.com/stateoftheliveweb/>

6. Types of Egyptian blogs

Themes or types of blogs might be classified in diverse and distinctive sets. The type of topics, interests and opinions introduced in the blog conveys its theme or type. In some blogs, the reader can pinpoint the focal interest on the home page. Others give the reader a chance to identify the blog theme. According to the content analysis of the blogs sample, only 30 blogs, representing 2.3%, stated their type on the home page. Results showed that 50% of those blogs classified themselves as 'various interests' blogs. The remaining blogs classified themselves under various themes including sports, religion, freedom, childhood and motherhood, literature and poetry, societal, fashion and clothes, crime and pictures. Such data was insufficient to comprehend the Egyptian blog map; therefore, this study resorted to analyzing the content of the basic blog sample using direct browsing of each blog. This methodology resulted in seven basic blog sets, as follows:

■ Various interests' blogs

30.7% of the sample fell in this category. This means that more than one-third of Egyptian blogs are not focused on a single area of interest. A sample of 42 Egyptian bloggers was interviewed. In response to the question on to what extent their blogs are associated with a certain subject area, the majority of the respondents reported a preference for blogging in multiple areas. In their opinion, they see that as they maintain diverse and changing interests, so do their readers; and that blogs must abandon static formats and stereotypes and meet this need for variety.

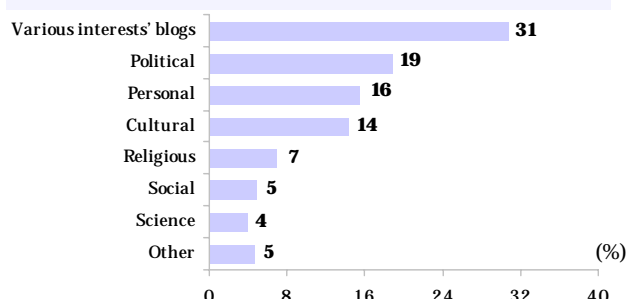
■ Political blogs

Blogs focused on politics rank second, scoring 18.9% of the total sample. This result stands in contradiction to the dominant perception on the part of the public, especially among the intelligentsia and a number of officials. Security confrontations with political opponents who are also active bloggers give the impression that blogging activity equates with anti-government political activity. In reality, this is not the case. Political blogging in Egypt is a definite type restricted to a certain sector of bloggers and blog readers. However, this type of blogging was, and still is, highly vocal within and outside the blogosphere.

■ Personal blogs

This category includes blogs that maintain content on the blogger's personal life and the personal opinions of blog readers about life, self, astrology, emotions, aspirations, desires and other such topics. 15.5% of the sample fell into this category.

Egyptian blog themes



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database ,IDSC, 2008

● 30.7% of Egyptian blogs focused on 'Various interests'.

● 18.9% are political blogs and 4.8% are socially-oriented.

● 15.5% are personal blogs.

● 14.4% of the blogs are cultural-oriented.

● 7% of blogs are religious.

● 4% of the blogs are science and technology-oriented.

■ Cultural blogs

This category is focused on literature, artistic, intellectual and journalistic interests representing 14.4%.

■ Religious blogs

This type comprised 7% of the total blogs in the sample. That means that while the number of religious sites is very large on the internet, coupled with an intensified religious content on TV satellite channels, religious blogging is really limited. Content analysis of the sample blogs showed a new generation of religiously orientated bloggers inclined towards approaching the activity away from the traditional religious moulds. It is expected that this will dissolve religious blogging into the huge blogosphere. Other religiously oriented bloggers are so concerned about dissolving that they group into closed blogging websites with restricted access.

■ Social blogs

This type constituted 4.8%. The content usually covers social problems such as male/female relations, overcrowded areas, marriage, divorce, violence and others.

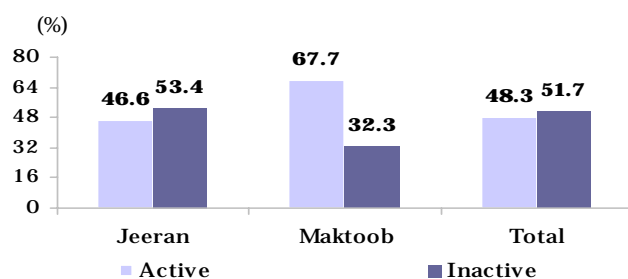
■ Science and technology-oriented blogs

This type comes at the end of the list with only 4% of the sample. Some of the bloggers in this category work in technology fields such as the internet, communications and computers.

7. Dynamics of the blogging movement

- A large segment of the Egyptian population, especially among youth, is very interested in creating blogs. That does not mean they are all actively blogging. In fact, there are blogs with limited postings that are waiting for more posts to populate them, or have sat for a long time without updates.
- In some cases, Arab blogging domains deliberately create this type of empty blog using pseudonyms expressly to attract a large audience by giving the impression that the domain is heavily frequented.
- Other blogs are regularly updated, so they are called active blogs. In order to identify the dynamic level of blogs, the following criteria were used: number of posts, comments, weekly updates, visitors, and hits, in addition to the blog's impact on public opinion on issues that require mobilizing a large public.
- A comprehensive count was conducted for all Egyptian blogs hosted on Maktoob and Jeeran. Both domains hosted, on April 20, 2008, some 127,000 blogs comprising 79.1% of all Egyptian blogs. The objective was to identify the number of active Egyptian blogs on the two largest blogging domains. For this purpose, this study used all the data available on these domains that refer to blogging activity. Results are as follows:
 - Total active Egyptian blogs on Jeeran came to 54,315, or 46.6%, compared with 62,077 inactive blogs comprising 53.4%.
 - Maktoob hosts 6,988 active blogs (67.7%) versus 3337 inactive blogs (32.2%).
 - These results indicate a difference between Jeeran and Maktoob in terms of blogging activity. Comparing Jeeran to Maktoob, in terms of the largest Egyptian blog collection, Jeeran comes first, but with regard to activity level, Maktoob dominates.
 - Based on this tally, it became possible to estimate the total number of active Egyptian blogs on both domains with 61303 representing 48.3% versus 65414 inactive blogs forming 51.7%.
- It was difficult to identify the dynamic level of Egyptian blogs hosted on other blogging domains. Nevertheless, the results of the tally conducted on the largest collection of Egyptian blogs on Jeeran and Maktoob can validate our conclusion. We came to a result that active blogs in the Egyptian blogosphere constitute 48% of the total of Egyptian blogs.

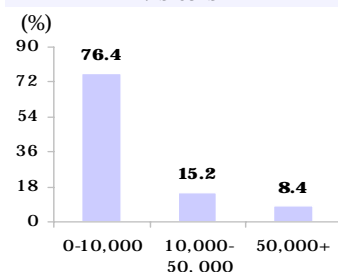
Activity of Egyptian blogs



Source: Figures are calculated based on the data obtained from the two sites:
www.maktoobblog.com
www.blog.jeeran.com

- 48.3% of Egyptian blogs are active.
- The total number of visitors to the majority of Egyptian blogs is less than 10,000.

Blogs by total number of visitors



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database, IDSC, 2008

As for the number of blog visitors, IDSC is currently working with Technorati and Alexa on obtaining data. Meanwhile, data stored on the database built using a sample of 1,312 Egyptian blogs can be used. It is possible to identify blogs that maintain a visitor counter on their homepages. Some bloggers, who seek to project a popular image, manipulate the number of visitors. However, this is a limited practice that can be easily cross-checked. Visitor counts may give an idea about blogging activity; however, we attempted to gauge the blogs' true dynamism rather than mere visitation. In this regard, we came to the following results:

- The sample showed that more than half of the blogs conceal or do not reveal the number of visitors – 51.4% compared with 48.6% who disclose the number.
- Blogs with fewer than 10,000 visitors represented 76.4% of the sample.
- Data indicate that 15.2% of the blogs attract a moderate number of visitors ranging between 10,000 and 50,000. 8.4% of the Egyptian blogs receive more than 50,000 visitors. This means that the rate of visits to Egyptian blogs is low compared to the international average.

Section 3

Content of The Egyptian Blogs

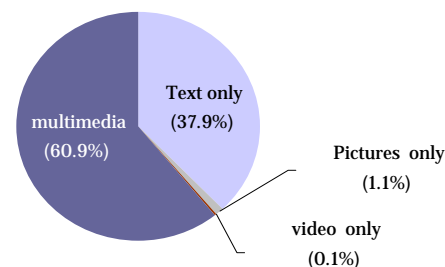
1. Posts

- Primarily blogs depend on the text that bloggers post. These may be supported by pictures, video clips, audio files and other elements. However, the written posts remain the most important content element of the blog, which stimulates the readers' interest and motivates them to interact with the blogger. Posts vary, ranging between a short simple sentence reflecting certain opinions and in-depth articles and analysis composed by writers, journalists, critics and politicians.
- The number of posts varies greatly according to the blog's effectiveness. The least active blog may contain only one entry versus 595 on the most active. It is evident that the Egyptian blogosphere is experiencing a large volume of blogging posts that is difficult to quantify.
- For the purpose of this report, we only counted posts in a sample of 217 blogs that was drawn between September 3 and November 10, 2007. The total number of posts on those blogs came to 2,607 with an average of 12 posts per blog.

2. Comments

- Comments are the readers' reactions to the blogger's opinion posted on his or her blog. In this regard, the blogger becomes a main party in the sequence of dialogue by responding to the posted comments. Most of the blogs allow a comment function; others may not because of technical limitations. In some cases, bloggers are enabled to authorize a certain group of readers and bloggers to post comments and delete undesirable posts.
- It was noted that many comments are either irrelevant or even non sequiturs. It may be that bloggers and readers find it a chance to just voice their opinions even if they are off-topic. We may observe, for instance, amid a dialogue on the low quality of public utilities, readers calling to attend a seminar or participate in a demonstration, or marketing a service, etc. Dialogues on blogs reveal a type of interaction where the need to share knowledge overlaps with the simple desire to converse.

Blogging media



Source: IDSC, Database of the Blogosphere in Egypt, 2008

- Most of the blogs enable a comment function. Only a few blogs enable comments exclusively for certain list of readers and bloggers.
- 217 Egyptian blogs contain 2,607 posts with an average of 12 per blog.

3. Blogging media

- Egyptian blogs use all the common media including written text, pictures, video clips and music. An analysis of the content of a sample of blogs revealed the following results:
 - 37.9% of all blogs use texts only.
 - 60.9% of the sampled blogs mix different blogging media. This reflects the multiple skills and experiences of Egyptian bloggers which attract a larger audience.
 - 1.1% use pictures only, eg. blogs publishing pictures of Egypt's monuments and attractions. In this regard, the blogger uses the pictures to express his or her favored locations and memories. The picture may even reflect the blogger's personality and life, present international paintings, or the blogger's graphic designs. In some blogs, movie shots are published. Only one blog used video clips exclusively.

4. Blogging language

The results of the content analysis showed some language indicators of blogging on Egyptian blogs, as follows:

- **Arabic is the most common language in Egyptian blogs**

76.8% of the blog sample publishes in Arabic, with some using colloquial Arabic (*Ammeya*) and others, especially literary and religious-oriented blogs, using classical Arabic (*fusha*). Most of the blogs mix classical and colloquial Arabic. What was really notable was the common use of neologisms arising from the vernacular of the youth which was present in most of the blogs written in colloquial Arabic. The blog title, posts, or comments may contain vocabulary that is only used among youth.

- **Blogging in English as a second language**

9.5% of the blog sample use English. Most of these blogs are hosted on worldwide domains such as Blogspot, Wordpress, Wordspirit and Blogsome.

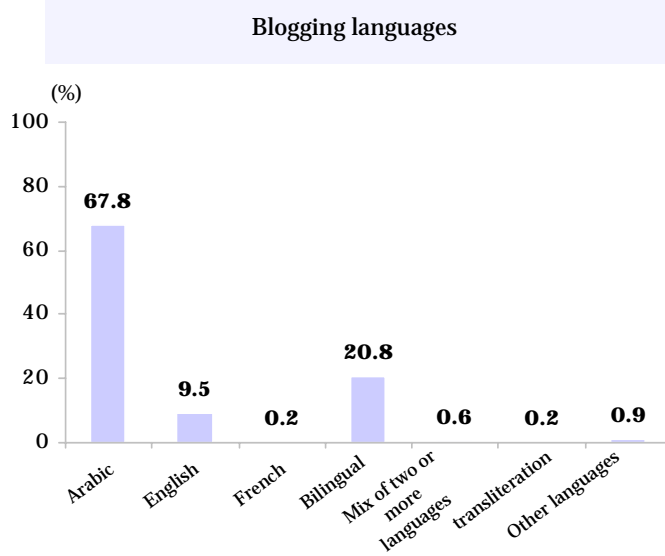
Some of these blogs are oriented towards introducing information about Egypt to foreign readers. In this regard, the blog might be titled Egypt and focused on touristic promotion. For this purpose, the content will talk about Egyptian and Pharaonic civilization. In most cases, posts are supported with pictures of touristic sites, and Egyptian sightseeing. In other cases, based on the blogger's profession, such as working in the area of the internet and communication, they use English as they do in their work. Egyptian immigrants living in Europe or U.S.A. have English as their first language, which is why they use it on their blogs.

Analysis results showed that 20.8% of the blog sample use Arabic and English. A number of bloggers using English maintain other Arabic language blogs simultaneously. In some cases, bloggers mix the two languages in the same blog. This indicates a variety in blogging using more than one language. Transliteration is a phenomenon, used in the bilingual blogs, that merits further study.

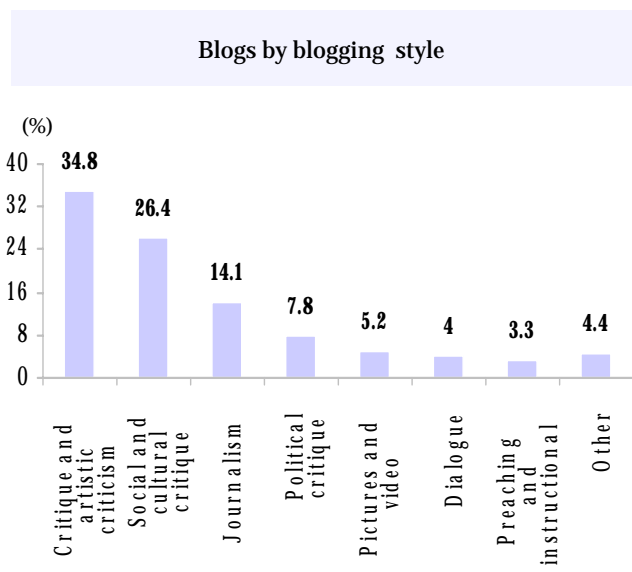
Only 1% of the Egyptian blogs are published in other European languages such as French and German.

- 76.8% of Egyptian blogs use Arabic language, with the majority mixing colloquial and classical.

- 9.6% of Egyptian blogs publish in English, and 20.8% are bilingual.



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database, IDSC, 2008



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database, IDSC, 2008

5. Blogging style

- Here we refer to the common posting style in blogs such as literary, journalistic, critique and so forth. However, we must differentiate between the area and style of blogging. The blog might be politically oriented, yet the writing comes in a dialogue format between the blogger and another virtual person. Thus, 34.8% of blogging posts were of literary style and artistic critique, followed by social and cultural criticism forming 26.4%. As for journalistic style blogging posts, they formed 14.1%. 7.8% of posts were written in a sarcastic political style.

6. Logos and symbols

- A content analysis of the sample of blogs revealed that 49.8% use logos and symbols to express the blog's orientation.
- Data showed that written text is the most commonly used medium in developing blog logos and symbols with an 83% share. Meanwhile, only 9% of the sampled blogs use picture logos. Other blogs mix text and pictures in presenting their logo.
- In some cases, blogs used political, religious, intellectual and literary oriented textual symbols and logos. Proverbs, cynical statements, poetry and principles of dogma might be used as a blog logo. In some cases, the bloggers used quotations or composed the texts. It was not evident how those logos might be consistent or inconsistent with the blog content.
- Although words might be metaphorical, some bloggers feel a need to support their words – that are usually powerful – with pictures serving as symbols. Others prefer to rely solely on a picture, either photos or illustrations, as their logo.

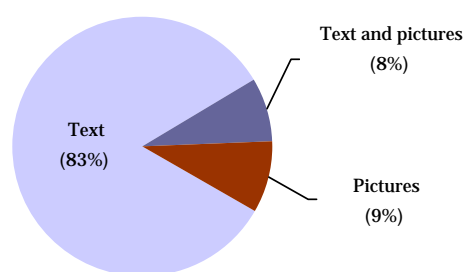
7. Blogging topics

- Although blogs might be specifically oriented towards a certain style, the general trend in blogging shows a variation among interests. However, this variation might exceed the blog horizon. These posts are important texts that require an analysis of their content and discourse type^[1].
- Content analysis run on the sampled blogs resulted in six dominant themes, as follows:

Personal themes:

36.7% of the sample was in the personal category. This indicates that most of the posts are focused on the blogger's personal interests. Posts would include personal thoughts, daily situations, and recalling memories. In this regard, the blogger's aim is to introduce themselves, gain new friends, and practice writing as a hobby. In some situations, the bloggers communicated messages to certain people they know as in the case of emotional posts between male and female.

Blogs by means of expressing logos and symbols

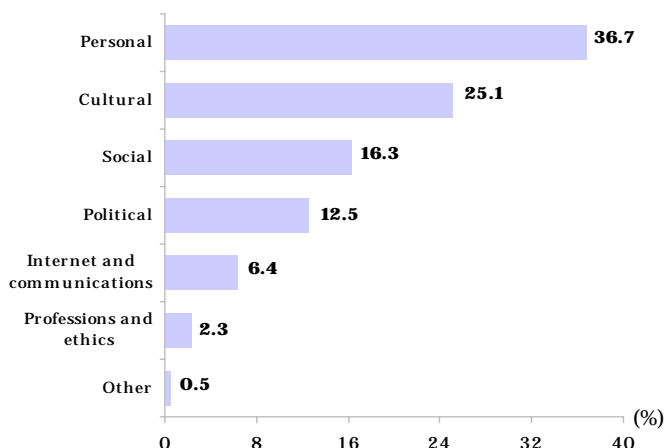


Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database, IDSC, 2008.

49.8% of Egyptian blogs express themselves using political, social, literary, intellectual, and religious logos and symbols.

83% of Egyptian blogs use wording in communicating their logo and symbols versus 9% that use pictures.

Blogs by theme



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database, IDSC, 2008

[1] We are in the process of applying methodologies of discourse analysis on some posts as part of the Egyptian Blogosphere Project

It is well noted that personal posts are more common among females and that female bloggers are more inclined to an anecdotal style of speech, writing more of personal impressions. Although male bloggers are less interested in this type of blogging, personal-style blogging can nevertheless enter their blogs in the form of presenting their autobiography or literary work as a self-presentation to the audience or in search of fame. Personal interests, within blogging, may serve as a springboard for the blogger to explore himself or herself and shift towards literary, cultural or political blogging.

Cultural themes

25.1% of the total posts sampled are culturally oriented including literary fiction, poetry, tourism, monuments, folk culture, legends and others.

Social themes:

Social posts discussed a number of societal issues including marriage, divorce, declining rates of marriage, motherhood and childhood, and women's position in society. Other issues and social problems were raised such as drug addiction, violence, corruption, robbery, etc. 16.3% of the sampled posts focused on these issues.

Political themes:

16.3% of the total sampled posts were politically oriented. Political topics varied to include: criticism of officials, issues of political parties in Egypt, Israeli aggression against Palestinians, citizenship, torture cases, the national constitution, the judges' crisis, a proposed economic boycott and others.

Internet and communications themes

Some posts are focused on information technology and information-related instructional services, especially by those who are professional in that field. Most of this category is male. 6.4% of the sample fit this category.

Religious and ethical themes

Religious and ethical values ranked in the sixth and last position among blogging interests, making up 6.4% of the sample. This result indicates that religious discourse in blogging is not highly popular.

8. Public figures

Public figures have special importance within the blogging field. This statement also applies to the majority of blogs under different themes as well as posts regardless of the theme. For this purpose, we analyzed the content of the sampled posts aiming to identify all names mentioned, frequency and classification in different areas. Based on the analysis, the number of public figures in the posts came to 915 from different fields. They were mentioned 2006 times with an average of 2.2 per figure. Analysis identified seven types of public figures, as follows:

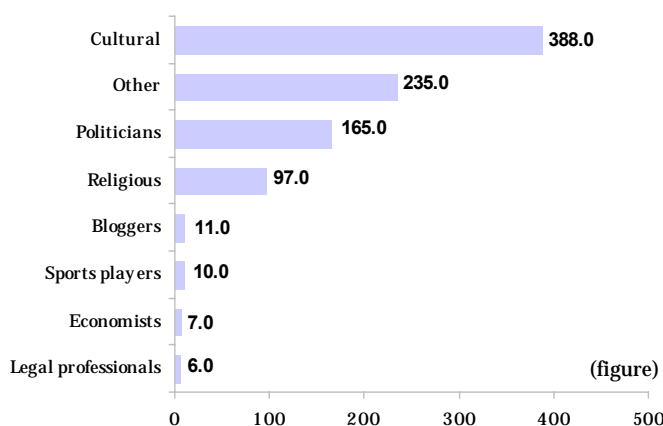
Cultural figures

This category includes writers, intellectuals, philosophers, and all types of artists. This category ranked first with 41.6% reflecting a major interest in cultural-oriented blogging. The three most frequently mentioned artistic and literary names were: singer Fayrouz, singer Mohamed Mounir, and Egyptian colloquial poet Ahmed Fouad Negm.

- 36.7% of the posts address personal themes.
- 16.3% of the posts are focused on political themes.

• 41.6% of public figures referred to on blogging were cultural and 19% were political.

Classification of public figures within posts



Source: The Blogosphere in Egypt Database ,IDSC, 2008

● **Political figures**

The second most commonly referenced were political figures who accounted for 19% of mentions. Relatively speaking, the impact of political blogging is limited compared with personal, cultural and social themes. However, talking about political figures engaged much interest. Political figures constitute a main source of blogging material on many politically-themed blogs as well as on some socially and culturally oriented blogs, which explains the figures' high ranking. This cross-over merits further study with regard to analyzing blogs' political discourse. The three most frequently mentioned political figures, according to the analysis were: President Mubarak, Mr. Gamal Mubarak and Mr. Hassan Nasrallah.

● **Religious figures**

Religious figures ranked third with a 10.4% share, which is consistent with the small number of religious-oriented blogs. The three most frequently mentioned figures in this category were: Prophet Mohamed, and Jesus, and Islamic activist Amr Khaled. In this context, the results reflect a Christian blogging interest parallel to the Islamic one as indicated from two prophets topping the list. Other signs shows increased Christian interest within the blogging activities and extended scope for Islamic address over various web sites outside the blogosphere.

● **Other figures**

Bloggers ranked fourth; sports players came fifth; economists, sixth; and finally, legal professionals, seventh. The most frequently mentioned included bloggers Mohamed Al Sharqawy, Mohamed Zahran, and Manal Bahey El-Deen ; football players Mohamed Abou Treika, Ahmed Hasan and Ahmed Shobair; businessmen Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal, Bill Gates and Naguib Sawiris; and legal professionals judge Hisham Al Bastawisy, Hosam Ashour and Tahany Al Gebaly.

● **Public figures by gender**

- According to the blog content analysis, citations for male figures exceeded females with 84.1% and 11.3% respectively. The remaining 4.6% were of unspecified gender.
- Mention of public figures by gender amounted to 86.8% males and 10.9% females. In some cases, it was difficult to determine the gender of some frequently mentioned figures, especially foreigners. This category formed 2.3%.
- The major area of interest in public figures was equal for both genders under intellectuals, politicians and religious.

- 84.8% of the public figures frequently mentioned were males compared with 10.9% females.

- The three most frequently mentioned figures were President Mubarak; Prophet Mohamed, blessings and peace be upon him; and Mr. Gamal Mubarak.

Section 4

Egyptian Bloggers

1. Identification criteria of Egyptian bloggers

- Bloggers are the individuals responsible for publishing the contents of the Egyptian blogs. They develop and update blogs and use posts to attract readers. An examination of bloggers' profiles, including direct personal information, traits and thoughts, can help in knowing them. Such profile forms provide data fields for the blogger's name, gender, age, education, location, profession, hobbies, interests and ideological orientation. Other criteria such as religious and political ideology and beliefs can be discerned in their posts.
- For this purpose, we based our analysis of the Egyptian bloggers' characteristics on the indicators resulting from analyzing their profile and social and cultural posts ^[1].

2. Estimation of the number of Egyptian bloggers

- There are no statistics to support estimations of the number of bloggers. In addition to the lack of statistics, the blogosphere is a free and random activity, and under such conditions, it is hard to run a comprehensive count. However, the Blogosphere in Egypt Project attempted to estimate the number of bloggers, using the indicators that resulted from analyzing the blog sample, as follows:

- According to the data from the sampled blogs, the number of blogs is inconsistent with that of the bloggers. For example, blogs might have one owner, and others are shared by more than one. In other cases, bloggers might own more than one blog.
- Assuming that inactive blogs, which were 52% of the sample, are maintained by one blogger, this is interpreted as 74,048 bloggers owning one inactive blog each, versus 68,352 active blogs with mixed single and multiple owners.
- 89% of all active blogs are each owned by a single blogger, which translates to 60,833 bloggers each owning just one active blog.

- 83.1% of 162,000 blogger own one blog: i.e., there are nearly 135,000 single-blog operators.

- 16.9% of Egyptian bloggers are active on 15.7% of 25,119 blogs.

- 3% of the total active Egyptian blogs are shared by more than one blogger with an average of five bloggers. This translates into 9,125 bloggers sharing 1,825 blogs.
- A number of bloggers own more than one blog with an average of three, constituting 8% of all active blogs. In other words, 1,822 bloggers own 5,468 blogs.
- Thus, the estimated number of Egyptian bloggers as of April 2008 may be 162,226, of which 83.1% or 134,881 own one blog each, versus 16.9% or 37,345 bloggers who share 25,119 blogs.

3. Bloggers' description of their identity

- Bloggers are usually attracted to this activity seeking freedom of expression by the appropriate means according to their choice. Whereas some bloggers introduce themselves focusing on certain characteristics, others might deliberately incorporate untrue traits seeking to project a special image, avoiding blame, stereotyping or security monitoring. An analysis of blog profiles applied a number of criteria to examine bloggers' means of describing their identity and the type of information to which they allow access. In particular, the analysis examines what bloggers reveal of their name, gender, age, education, profession, marital status, location, e-mail, and astrological sign. Details are as follows:

● Blogger's handle

Bloggers use handles (or names) that are consistent with the blog title, with 10.3% using pseudonyms. Those names are often metaphorical, such as "The Vicious" and the "The Oppressed".

^[1] Two studies applying methodologies of discourse analysis methodologies on social and political blogs are being conducted as part of the Blogosphere in Egypt Project.

Bloggers are mostly male

77.6% of blog profiles include a gender field. Regardless of the blogger's honesty in revealing gender, checking particular blogging groups where bloggers seemed to know each other in real life, they interacted using gender address form that confirms the contents of the profile gender field. Data revealed a dominant percentage of male bloggers with 73% versus 27% female.

Bloggers are mostly young

62.3% of the blogs refer to the blogger's age apparently accurately. However, a few bloggers provided clearly false ages such as being over 500. According to the study, most of the bloggers fall in the age group 20-30 representing 53.1%. Next comes the 30-40 age group at 18.8%, and finally 17% who are under 20. As for those aged over 40, they make up 11.1% of bloggers. In other words, the bloggers' age composition is youth-dominated such that 70.1% of all bloggers are 30 and under.

More than 50% of the bloggers complete the location field

55.1% of the bloggers input Egypt in the location field of the profile form. However, 0.2% provided false locations. 23.6% of the bloggers published their email address on their blogs as contact information. In other words, they mostly prefer to conceal their identity outside the blogosphere.

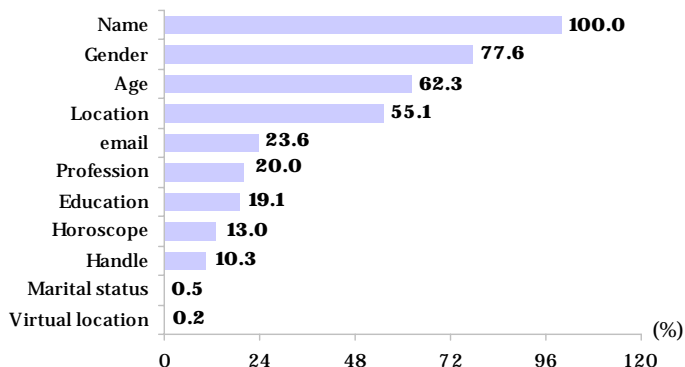
Most of the bloggers skip the education, profession and marital status profile fields

Few blogs revealed the educational (19.1%), professional (20%) and marital status (0.5%) information of its owners.

A few bloggers are interested in astrology

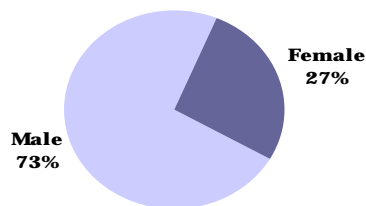
Expressing an interest in astrological horoscopes may to some extent reflect a belief in myths in self-representation. Only 13% of the sampled blogs showed the bloggers' astrological sign, with the majority falling into Libra (16.1%), Capricorn (11.3%), and Virgo (10.6%).

Revealing the bloggers' identity



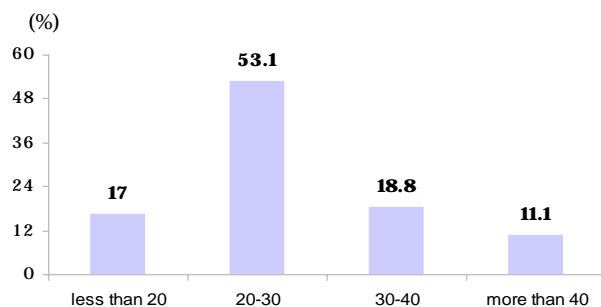
Source: IDSC, Database of the Blogosphere in Egypt, 2008

Bloggers by gender



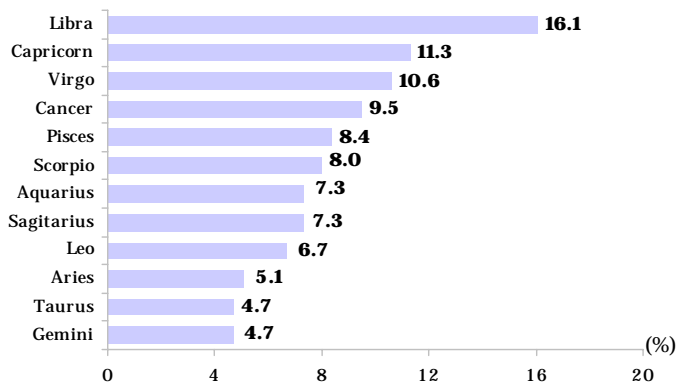
Source: IDSC, Database of the Blogosphere in Egypt, 2008

Bloggers by age group



Source: IDSC, Database of the Blogosphere in Egypt, 2008

Bloggers by horoscope



Source: IDSC, Database of the Blogosphere in Egypt, 2008

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