

Enlarge EU Newsletter July 2008 Edition

Beyond Blogging: Macedonia: Exploring new media

For a while now, the world is faced with “blogging fever” a new media revolution reflecting the hunger for fresh and nontraditionally served information. Following the email and webpage, the blog has become original tool for communication aspiring to maintain stronger relationship and loyalty with the consumers. By starting up numerous individual blogs, blog platforms and blog-related activities Macedonia has shyly joined the global blogosphere. **But is Macedonian blogging community strong enough to handle the mainstream media impact? Will it make “blogging” not just a modern and quite cheap but also a powerful medium? And finally, can we rely on the information on blogs?**

Mapping Macedonian Blogosphere

As probably elsewhere in the world, the number of blog users in Macedonian blogosphere is rapidly growing. The reason could be in the fact that blog-hosting services have made it easy to create a blog or perhaps the blog itself attracts new followers. Nevertheless, some data shows that the assumed number does not necessarily fit the actual status quo since very large portion of Macedonian blogs are not active and do not publish new posts regularly. Many have just opened accounts to test the service or to

comment on others' posts. Unofficially, today they are around 20,000 blogs (both individual and corporate) feeding Macedonian blogosphere. According to a survey conducted by *New Media Center*, 58.8% of Macedonian internet users have their own blogs. However, the picture looks like a mosaic of a few outstanding and a huge number of less-known blogs, each contributing in particular genre starting from an ordinary diaries, travel chronicles to technical advice columns and political commentary or as the same survey shows the most of them (35.8%) read 2-3 blogs daily. Still, in the last couple of years the Macedonian blogosphere has made significant development. Macedonian bloggers joined the formal Association of Bloggers of Macedonia and under their mentorship the first **Youth Blog Training** was conducted in June this year. Last year, **New Media Center** organized MK Blog conference where interesting topics related to progress of the network society were discussed while this year New York University Skopje hosted the Second International Conference **Glocal 2.0: Blogging: Evolution treated as Revolution** which gathered international group of researchers and practitioners (bloggers) for a discussion and analysis on the emerging networked society. These are only part of the activities initiated and organized by Macedonian bloggers. Maybe most interesting fact are Macedonian bloggers themselves - writers, poets who published books whose content was already published on their blogs. (Bukarski, Kostadinova; “Izdanie –Blog zapisi” etc.)

Avoiding the trap: Is it really credible source of information!?

While skeptics question the credibility of information posted due to the absence of any quality control mechanisms, the usual answers given by Macedonian bloggers is that the true quality debate starts exactly after posting the opinion which is not case in traditional media where the information is simply served and hardly unbiased. Blogs are exactly about “keeping the finger on the pulse” - feeling what are the readers reactions to certain ideas, stories. This gives them a freedom to choose what to believe in. That is how, despite the above mentioned constraints, the blog appears to play a very important role in public debate sphere. Besides, internet users prefer blogs also because they keep them updated with the latest trends, they are interesting and fun and mostly because of the obvious biases.

After all, easy to start, sometimes hard to maintain, blogs remains the most dynamic, inconsistent but still very promising source of fresh, objective and challenging information and equal opportunities space. Macedonia has accepted the challenge and became part of the global blogging community, of course, putting on it its own original mark.

Source's "Short History of Macedonian Blogosphere" by F. Stojanovski.

New media Center on line Survey presented at Glocal 2.0: Blogging: Evolution treated as Revolution

EnlargeEU Newsletter is also available at Analytica's blog: www.analyticamk.blogspot.com

QUICK FACTS:

First Macedonian Blog launched: **2001**

The most popular blog platform: **Blogeraj**

<http://blog.com.mk/>

The estimated number of active Macedonian Blogs: **20 000**

The estimated number of daily visitors of the most popular blogs: **100-200**

Some interesting Macedonian Blogs:

bukarski.blog.com.mk, femgerila.blog.com.mk,
arheo.com.mk, kvadraturanakrug.blog.com.mk,
qzevski.blog.com.mk, oksimoron.blog.com.mk,
antipunkt.blogspot.com, vuna.info..