

October 10, 2006 6:08 am

European bloggers find their voice

By Kate Mackenzie

Readership of blogs in Europe is catching up with the US, but the most popular blogs are still dominated by Americans, according to new research which compares bloggers of different nationalities.

However blogs are becoming an increasingly important part of political life in both Europe and the US, with more than a quarter of readers of the websites spurred to political or civic action.

A study by Edelman, the public relations company, and Technorati, the blog search engine, found that the top 100 most influential bloggers worldwide – measured by the number of links they receive from other blogs – were almost all from the US, with only a satirical Italian blog (also published in English) breaking in at number 28. The most influential UK blog, Gaping Void, was ranked 139th.

The 100 most influential bloggers in German, French and Italian were also ranked, revealing a divergence of themes and networks among national groups.

While technology, business and politics dominate the overall rankings, personal diary-style blogs are far more popular in Europe, accounting for 43 per cent of the top blogs in Italy and 30 per cent in Europe. In France, blogs about food accounted for 19 of the top 100 blogs, although this category was insignificant in other countries.

“The key difference is that the blogs in certain regions are very personal in nature, as opposed to being very business focused,” said Steve Rubel, senior vice-president at Edelman’s me2revolution Group.

Top French bloggers link far more frequently to other French blogs than to news websites, while in the US and Italy the trend is reversed, Mr Rubel said.

Coverage of big companies was still limited, he said, especially outside sectors such as technology. British Airways, for example,

was mentioned only 20 times in the past six months and French companies such as Peugeot are barely visible, even among French bloggers.

However Mr Rubel, himself a prolific blogger, said organisations wanting to reach online authors and their readers should not focus too heavily on the top worldwide blogs. “Every community of blogs has its culture – it reflects the local culture. When we studied these blogs, we found that while they primarily link to things in their own country, they do sometimes link to The New York Times or to US blogs.”

Edelman and Technorati are also carrying out research into Korean and Chinese blogs.

In a separate survey, Edelman found that about 23 per cent of those in the UK read blogs, compared with 22 per cent in France and 27 per cent in the US. Of the four countries surveyed, Belgium lagged with only 14 per cent.

In each country more than a quarter of those readers were galvanised into political action by what they learned; the most popular forms of action were signing petitions and attending public meetings.

David Brain, president and chief executive of Edelman Europe, said avid readers of blogs were more likely to be politically active, as many top blogs are political. He said the research suggested political parties, NGOs and other organisations “should be looking to the blogosphere to get action”.

Blogs are attracting increasing interest from marketers who want to take advantage of their viral nature and grassroots appeal. However they can also be a public relations nightmare: Dell, for example, is widely believed to have suffered a greater fallout from its battery recall because of widespread criticism from high-profile bloggers.

“Most of our clients are now monitoring [blogs],” said Mr Brain. “They’re aware of it from a crisis management point of view, but few are aware of the benefits.”

Top 10 most influential blogs

Source: Edelman and Technorati

UK*

Gapingvoid

The Layer of the Crab of Ineffable Wisdom

EU Referendum

Tech Digest

plasticbag.org

Samizdata.net

c h r o m a s i a

Londonist

Iain Dale's Diary

Mind Hacks

Loic Le Meur Blog

*UK blogs are ranked manually, unlike other lists

French

Pointblog.com

Techcrunch en Français

Journal d'un avocat

Plusjamaisseul.net

Blog à la ciboulette

Clea Cuisine

FredCavazza.net

Standblog

presse-citron

internetactu

German

BILDblog

Spreeblick

Zeitgrund Blog

Basic Thinking Blog

4nul4.de

Lawblog.de

Ehrensensf Internet TV

Dr. Web Magazin

Netzpolitik.org

Werbeblogger Weblog

Italian

Blog di Beppe Grillo

7 in Condotta

Italia SW Recensioni

Blogosfere

Roundhouse Kicks

Robinik.net

Macchianera

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