Chapter 95
Influential Greek Political Blogs:
What Are They Talking About?

Kostas Zafiropoulos
University of Macedonia, Greece

Dimitrios Vagianos
University of Macedonia, Greece

Vasiliki Vrana
Technological Education Institute of Serres, Greece

ABSTRACT

Blogs are becoming one of the most popular media of communication and interaction. They increase people's participation and enhance discussion on political matters. The chapter uses quantitative blog features analysis and associates it with content analysis of eParticipation topics to detect influential blogs in the Greek political blogosphere. Through a sampling procedure, 127 Greek political blogs are recorded. Four indexes of influence and one overall influence index are calculated for each one of them to record their influence. Further, content analysis of the blogs results in finding how many of them discuss eParticipation topics. Analysis shows that eParticipation topics discussion is a property of the influential political blogs.

INTRODUCTION

Blogs and generally ICT have changed the way people engage in politics (Vatrapu, et al., 2008), create, structure and influence political discourse (Lawrence & Dion, 2010) make the relationship between political talk and online participation all the more interesting (Gil de Zúñiga, et al., 2010) and impact the media and public agenda (Drezner & Farrell, 2008). Political blogs are defined as:

Weblogs on which the content focuses on issues, events and policy in a constituency, national, international or party political context (Ferguson & Howell, 2004).

Politically oriented blogs emerged after the events of September 11, 2001 as people turned to blogs to express their feelings about the terrorist attacks and to locate information not available in the mainstream media (McKenna & Pole, 2004;

Wallsten, 2005). In Greece, blogs emerged after the events of 2007. People used blogs in order to express their political awareness and their feelings about major events that happened during that year. In 2007, Greek blogs revealed that foreigners had been beaten in the police department of Omonia square in the centre of Athens. Bloggers also raised concern about the environment, after the deforestation caused by fires in Peloponnese, created a protest and organized a big demonstration in the Syntagma Square in Athens. In 2008, blogs began to exercise influence on Greek politics. A growing amount of political leaders created their own blogs and started dialogue with bloggers. The number of people engaging in explicitly political blogging has increased in recent years following the overall explosion of blogging activity (Wallsten, 2008).

Blogs shift mainstream control of information into the hands of the audience (Kim & Chung, 2007) as bloggers became providers rather than just consumers of information (Sigala, 2009). Thus, blogs may exert a certain level of influence on the readers purchase decisions, attitudes and approaches to life and political viewpoints (Tan, et al., 2011). Moreover, political blogs are viewed, by Web users, as a credible source which provides depth and thoughtful analysis, for the reason that blogs are independent from corporate-controlled media (Johnson & Kaye, 2004; Singer, 2006). In this vein the questions that arise are: All blogs have the same influence? How can influence be detected? What influential blogs are talking about? The chapter aims at locating influential blogs in Greek political blogosphere and associates influence with content, in order to distinguish whether influence comes with high activity regarding discussion of eParticipation topics.

BLOGS' COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Political blogs form political discourse and enhance participation through hypertext links, blogrolls, posts and opinionated commentary, calls to political action, and requests for feedback (McKenna & Pole, 2004; Wallsten, 2008).

A "blogroll" is a list of blogs that many bloggers maintain for regular navigation and frequent visits to linked blogs. The blogroll occupies a permanent position on the blog's home page and is the list of blogs that the blogger frequently reads or especially admires and thus offers links to these blogs (Marlow, 2004). In this vein, the blogroll can be regarded as indicative of the communication networks of the blogger (Park & Jankofski, 2008).

Political discourse and information exchange in the blogosphere can also be achieved by comments on posts (Drezner & Farrell, 2008; Mishne & Glance, 2006). Comments are reader-contributed replies to a specific post within the blog (Marlow, 2004). In that way bloggers can connect their own ideas with those of others (Brady, 2005). Political bloggers spend most of their time responding to the arguments made by other political bloggers and link primarily to bloggers who share their ideological predispositions (Adamic & Glance, 2005; Wallsten, 2008).

Interactivity between blogs can be also achieved by trackbacks and pingbacks. Trackback is a citation notification system (Brady, 2005). Trackbacks enables bloggers to determine when other bloggers have written another entry of their own that references their original post.

If both weblogs are enabled with trackback functionality, a reference from a post on weblog A to another post on weblog B will update the post on B to contain a back-reference to the post on A (Marlow, 2004).

A pingback is an automated trackback. Pingbacks support auto-discovery where the software automatically finds out the links in a post, and automatically tries to pingback those URLs, while trackbacks must be done manually by entering the trackback URL that the trackback should be sent to (http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging#Pingbacks).

Related Content

The Public Sector Cloud Service Procurement in Sweden: An Exploratory Study of Use and Information Security Challenges
M. Sirajul Islamand Fredrik Karlsson (2021). *International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age (pp. 1-22).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-public-sector-cloud-service-procurement-in-sweden/302906

The Potential Role of the Software Industry in Supporting Economic Development
Sherif H. Kamel (2019). *Advanced Methodologies and Technologies in Government and Society (pp. 444-455).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-potential-role-of-the-software-industry-in-supporting-economic-development/215883

Women in American Labour Movement: Overcoming Exclusion and Sex-Based Discrimination
Marjory Diana Fields (2019). *International Journal of Public and Private Perspectives on Healthcare, Culture, and the Environment (pp. 59-66).*
www.irma-international.org/article/women-in-american-labour-movement/231619

Early Worm Detection for Minimizing Damage in E-Service Networks
Tarek Sobhand Heba Z. El-Fiqi (2011). *Handbook of Research on E-Services in the Public Sector: E-Government Strategies and Advancements (pp. 336-358).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/early-worm-detection-minimizing-damage/46275

Designing a Semantic Tool to Evaluate Web Content of Government Websites
Manoj A. Thomasand Jaffar A. Alalwan (2016). *International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age (pp. 19-36).*
www.irma-international.org/article/designing-a-semantic-tool-to-evaluate-web-content-of-government-websites/146805