The Malaysian lifestyle blog: a national blogging genre?

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YeungNam University, Korea
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Summary

• Introduction
• Historical context
• Blog affordances
• Blog genres
• Lifestyle blog
• Ritual genre
• Blogosphere?
• Blogmeets
• Reasons for Lifestyle blog?
• Malaysian field of blogging?
• Conclusions

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Introduction

• Lifestyle blog: genre developed alongside increased popularity of blogs, and commercial interests

• Is the Lifestyle blog actually something unique to Malaysia (& Singapore)?
Historical context

• 1996: the Multimedia Super Corridor marked the emergence of the internet in Malaysia.
• 1998: ‘Reformasi’ in 1998 saw the deployment of websites and email for political dissent.
• 1998 - 2000: early blogs, Malay group ‘G engjurnal’
• 2003: Project Petaling Street – blog portal
• 2005:
  - ‘nude pictures’ of blogger in Singapore
  - SoPo blogger threatened with legal action.
• 2006: “Bootylicious bloggers” featured in tabloid
• 2007:
  - leading SoPo bloggers sued
  - BlogAdN et founded – blogs become marketing tool
• 2008: General Election
  - Blogs played an important role and subsequently become integral to the public sphere
• 2010: blogs prevalent, also Facebook, Twitter, etc.
Blog affordances

• Sociotechnology – “the distinctive technological activity that stems from the linkage of techniques and material culture to the social coordination of labour.” (Pfaffenberger 1992, p.497)

• Blog: “frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence” Herring et al. (2004, p.1)

• “blogs are not a genre of communication, but a medium through which communication occurs.” (boyd 2006, para 58)

• Three distinctive sociotechnical affordances: hyperlinking, chronological relevance, and comments
  – Promote a personalised. ‘authentic’, performance, and dialogical meanings

• Most blogs are ‘Personal’ blogs (Brake 2009, p.9)
Blog genres

- Herring et al. (2004, p.6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal journal</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-log</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>199</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cc) Julian Hopkins 2010
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Focuses on personal events, thoughts, etc.</td>
<td>Most common type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closely related to the Lifestyle blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>Focuses on personal activities, but of a more social nature (parties, travelling…)</td>
<td>Closely related to the Personal blog, but not so likely to include rants, intimate thoughts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoPo (Social-Political)</td>
<td>Focuses on social and political commentary</td>
<td>Emphasises the discourse of free speech, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘Fifth estate’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aka “Filter blog” (Herring et al 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech</td>
<td>Focus on ‘geek’ topics: software, gadgets, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Focus on making and eating food</td>
<td>Restaurant reviews, recipes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A version of the ‘Niche blog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogshop</td>
<td>Using a blog as a way to sell goods online</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problog</td>
<td>Focus on ways of making money online</td>
<td>Often using the multi-level marketing (MLM) model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Affiliate schemes, ebooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>The blog complements a person’s offline professional activity</td>
<td>Some politicians’ blogs can come under this category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corporate blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niche blogs</td>
<td>Focus on a narrow interest: Hobbies, Religion, Comic, Parenting</td>
<td>Food, Tech and Parenting are also Niche blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Useful for search engine optimisation (SEO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some of these could be “k-blogs” (Herring et al 2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Blog genres

• ‘Lifestyle’ blog
  - Earliest mention I can find is in 2005
  - Seems to be mostly Malaysian/Singaporean

• “I believe ‘lifestyle blogger’ was supposed to be derogatory: in short, it was used to describe bloggers who weren't ‘serious’ enough in their blogging.” (Kamal, personal communication, 2009)

• Tan & Zawawi – December 2006: 4.8% chose “Lifestyle (e.g. food, travelling)” (2008, p.47)

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ADV: The Apple iBlackBerry

Several weeks ago, I bought myself a BlackBerry because I dropped my almost 1-year-old iPhone in a freak accident.

The sight of a lifeless Apple iPhone with a big blank screen is one of those things that could make a grown man cry. I had to beg the Maxis guys to repair it for me for free eventhough I lost the warranty card.

The point is, I'm gonna be iPhone-less for at least a few weeks and I cannot stand it.

I loved my iPhone and I still think it's one of the best all-around phones in the world. But I've also heard good things about the Blackberry from their evangelists. So while my iPhone was still under ICU (aka the Maxis service centre in Kuching), I got the chance to test the BlackBerry for a bit.

(www.kennysia.com)
Monday, 29 March 2010

My LA Marathon Race

The Los Angeles marathon was absolutely extraordinary. For 42km, I ran with a camera in hand shooting videos like a Hollywood director until the battery went flat.

My LA Marathon Race: A Video Journey

It has been crazy fun tripping through the USA - but I’m ready to come home tomorrow. :)

31 Comments

1. lime on and first
2. Cowardly Anonymous Chicken

wah...so excited...running with a handy camera...rely cho
Olympus PEN Liz Lisa Style
April 21, 2010

Since I’m all like, spring-obsessed, I decided to dress up my most loved Olympus PEN E-PL1 Liz Lisa spring style.

This Olympus is actually quite evil. After making me obsessed with the camera, nayo wanna tempt me to buy all their accessories.

The below accessories for Olympus PEN E-PL1 are loan items (again T___T). But I really really wanna get one for my cam. Help me choose which one is best okay!

#1 hand strap RM140, Leather body jacket RM300

NO MORE boring black straps and black casing!!!!!
Dessert extravaganza

April 20, 2010

[Image of a person with a dessert]

Fight with Wombeh’s phone

Pat Her just got himself a new Blackberry!

He took forever deciding if he should get an Iphone or a BB and he was leaning towards the Iphone because Pat Her is a kid at heart and he was occupied with the amount of apps that he could have at the tips of his fingers wh.

And he also had to go around to all the telcos to check out packages and rates and contract terms and conditions. So that took more time.

But then I guess he decided to get a BB to fit in with his peers WTF.

And he chose Maxis partly because they’ve been my family’s telco since forever and partly because he thought they had the best plans and rates.

Right now there are a lot of different plans in the market from all the different telcos and it looks like the Iphone market is particularly competitive.

This is me being competitive with Wombeh’s phone.
Lifestyle blog

Self-categorisation of blogs - Top four overall categories

- All Bloggers (n=356)
  - 64.0%
  - 37.6%
  - 28.1%
  - 21.1%

- Monetisers (n=183)
  - 63.9%
  - 30.1%
  - 29.0%
  - 15.8%

- Non-Monetisers (n=173)
  - 64.2%
  - 30.1%
  - 29.0%
  - 10.0%

SoPo
Food
Writing/Art
Lifestyle
Diary
Personal

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Lifestyle blog

Self-categorisation - Most relevant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All Bloggers (n=356)</th>
<th>Monetisers (n=183)</th>
<th>Non-Monetisers (n=173)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SoPo</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing/Art</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### "Things you are more likely to blog about"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Bloggers (n=356)</th>
<th>Monetisers (n=183)</th>
<th>Non-Monetisers (n=173)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Friends (59.8%)</td>
<td>Friends (62.8%)</td>
<td>Friends &amp; Events (56.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Events (59.3%)</td>
<td>Events (61.7%)</td>
<td>Family (47.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Travel (50.6%)</td>
<td>Food &amp; Travel (57.9%)</td>
<td>Hobby (45.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Food &amp; Hobby (47.5%)</td>
<td>Hobby (49.7%)</td>
<td>Travel &amp; Relationships (42.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cross-tab: 'Things you are more likely to blog about' X Self-Categorisation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected 'Personal' (n=137)</th>
<th>Selected 'Lifestyle' (n=25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends (71.5%)</td>
<td>Events (60.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel (76%)</td>
<td>Food &amp; Events (68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events (60.6%)</td>
<td>Relationships (56.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Events (68%)</td>
<td>Friends (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships (56.9%)</td>
<td>Travel (54.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends (64%)</td>
<td>Hobby &amp; News (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel (54.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Lifestyle blog

“I consider mine a Lifestyle blog, I tend to travel a lot, attend events, and I write about food every now and then, write about my opinion on certain things [...] what’s cool, what’s there to do, this sort of thing [...] So it’s an evolvement of my previous blogging style which is personal blog. With personal blogs you rather write a lot more about what you think... about your family, your relationship, stuff like that I guess.” (Tommy, interview, August 5, 2008)
Lifestyle blog

• Thomas has had four blogs, and said: “the previous ones are more personal, the one that I’m having now is a lifestyle, that connect with more people because personal ones are more boring in general [... ] when it is a diary it only connects to people around you, who know you.” (Thomas, interview, 13 August 2009)
Lifestyle blog

“The difference in these two blogs is actually very very little [...] a lifestyle blog would cover more, merrier things in life such as fashion, music, travel and stuff like that, but it can also be covered in a personal blog, but it’s just that when it comes to personal it’s everything all together. While in the lifestyle blog you shouldn’t, it’s more to how to live your life and stuff like that; and doesn’t really deploy the subject of much opinions that much, or feelings, and stuff like that. So it’s actually a very thin line in between, and I actually think that [they] almost merge.”

“I would consider [Tommy’s blog] as a personal blog”

(Andy, interview, 10 August, 2009)
Ritual genre

• Genres not only in a textual sense, but as a form of ritual communication – recreating social forms (Couldry 2003)

• “text types or forms of communication associated with a social purpose and occasion.” (Schirato & Yell 2000, p.56)
Blogosphere?

• Schmidt (2007) proposes “communities of blogging practices […] framed […] by […] three structural elements: rules, relations, and code”

• ‘Community’ – methodological implications

• ‘Malaysian field of blogging’
  - a relational network defined by common practices and goals articulated around blogs, amongst which the actors have a common affiliation or interest to Malaysia

• Bourdieu (1998): autonomous fields, heteronomous actors

• Glocalisation (Miller & Slater 2000)

• Lifestyle blogs: are there common practices, common goals, reproduction of structural elements?
  - Textually
  - Goals
  - Structural elements

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Blogmeets

• Little overlap between SoPo and Personal/Lifestyle
• BlogAdN et organise events that provide material for Lifestyle-type blogging
• The majority since 2007 have been organised by BlogAdN et
No Compromise for Mister Potato Fiesta 2009

What is the purpose of a potato chip? What is its function? What defines a potato chip?

For the answer, we can turn to the wisdom of ancient Greek philosophers, and Aristotle in particular:

He argued that everything has a goal, which is its reason to exist. Many things and animals have something in common – but what defines them is what they have which is intrinsic and unique to themselves. For example: both birds and fish eat food, but a fish cannot fly and nor can a bird swim. Therefore, the function unique to a bird is to fly – so, a happy bird is one that can fly (so don’t go putting birds in tiny cages 😅)

So, what about a potato chip? Well, it’s clear, the purpose of a potato chip is to be a tasty snack.

First, it has to be somewhat filling (but not too much, it’s a snack, remember): as an Irishman, I will of course need my occasional does of potatoes, so potato chips do the job well 😋

What is the other function of a potato chip? It is to delight your five senses: touch, sight, sound, smell and taste:

**Touch:** a potato chip should be light, with a delicate dusting of salt and flavoursome goodness that adheres slightly to the fingers, providing extra delight when you lick it off (or let your dog lick it off, **”after”** you’ve done eating)
Mr. Potato rocks with Hujan!

After blogging about philosophy and potato chips for Nuffnang, I got invited to the ‘Mr. Potato Fiesta’ last week.

It was at the Mist Club in Bangsar.

As usual with the Nuffnang events, there were prizes galore given out, food and drinks were provided - the beer was upstairs on the balcony for some reason and at first we missed it. The door gift was a big bag full of potato chips, a ‘Mexican’ hat (actually, it was one of those gardener’s hats you see workers by the road using, painted in red - but it did the trick 😁), and a fake moustache. The bag is a good sturdy reusable bag, and I’m using it to go to the market now.
There were prizes for best dressed, and for the best blog post - top prize RM5,000! Nice! Second was 3K, and third 2K.

The top blogger was Keck, second place was The Egg Yolks, and the third created a new blog for the entry - Mr. Fussy, which was pretty smart I think.
Photo credit: The Star Online
Reasons for Lifestyle blog?

• Banner ads and advertorials (paid posts)
• BlogAdNet: local audience for local advertisers
• Historical parallel: radio programming in USA developed as means to sell radios, and as a platform for advertising (Jackaway 1995)
  – Soap opera as a genre

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Reasons for Lifestyle blog?

• Is it an industrial adaptation?
• Poor quality/state control of MSM?
• Is it contingent upon the changing circumstances of the first generation bloggers?

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“I've gone through my phases of writing; first it was, solely for myself; then I realised I had an audience, but it was OK, it’s still for myself. And then [...] I was really busy in working life, but I was still trying to keep the blog alive [...] And, after that the advertising money started coming in, so it was important to keep it alive”
(Nicky, interview, October 26, 2009)
Malaysian field of blogging?

- Lifestyle blog suits local advertising – e.g. Google AdSense is not as well localised
- Practice of giving incentives for material in the mainstream media is common
- Importance of personal networks; patronage

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Bloggers in the spotlight

By Julian Hopkins

You’ve followed them on social media, and now it’s time to see what they’re like off it. Project: Ali the blogger and Tilly McCrory with a selection of popular local bloggers in Bradford.

Arwan Ali

In-Style Bradford is a local fashion, beauty and lifestyle blog run by Arwan Ali, who has been featured in national newspapers for his blog. He is a regular contributor to Bradford Life magazine and has worked with local businesses to promote their products.

Joe Lee

Joe Lee is a Bradford-based graphic designer and blogger. He has been featured in national media for his work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

Ninie Ahmad

Ninie Ahmad is a Bradford-based fashion blogger and stylist. She has been featured in national newspapers and magazines for her work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

Teoh Kar Young

Teoh Kar Young is a Bradford-based lifestyle blogger and musician. He has been featured in national media for his work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

Facebook or Twitter?

Each platform has its own advantages, but for Arwan Ali, it’s all about the relationship between the blogger and the reader.

Facebook is more of a personal touch, where you can interact with your followers and share your personal life. Twitter, on the other hand, is more about sharing your thoughts and ideas with others.

What’s next?

Arwan Ali is working on developing his brand further and plans to expand his blog to include more content and collaborations with local businesses.

Gareth Davies

Gareth Davies is a Bradford-based lifestyle blogger and photographer. He has been featured in national media for his work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

Niki Cheung

Niki Cheung is a Bradford-based lifestyle blogger and writer. She has been featured in national media for her work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

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What’s next?

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 FEATURED BLOGGERS

Wendy Chen

Wendy Chen is a Bradford-based lifestyle blogger and photographer. She has been featured in national media for her work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

Angelique Chen

Angelique Chen is a Bradford-based lifestyle blogger and photographer. She has been featured in national media for her work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

Binga Ten

Binga Ten is a Bradford-based lifestyle blogger and photographer. She has been featured in national media for her work and has also been a guest speaker at various events.

(ye 2010)
Malaysian field of blogging?

• "I can honestly say that I had no idea before the trip how big blogging is in Asia. There are bloggers who are like ‘celebrities’ (as well as some who actually are celebrities who also blog). It was so unusual at the Awards to have people come up and request photos with me and Immy.” (Burnett 2009)

• “Asian bloggers they tend to blog about their personal lives, basically everything that they’re doing you know like where they’ve gone, where they’ve eaten, where they’ve shopped, where they’ve travelled. Whereas in Western countries, like Australia for example, people are much more private; so they actually go much more into subject-specific interests, so like craft blogging, photography blogs, fashion blogs, things like that. Those are the main differences.” (Ming, 938Live radio interview, 26 October 2009)
Malaysian field of blogging?

• “Filipino bloggers have the distinct advantage of freedom of speech compared to some of our Asian neighbors. There lies the difference in diverse content among our Asian counterparts.” (Lardizabal-Dado 2009)

• “This is Xia Xue. Unknown to me before the awards night, she has a massive following in Asia and can be considered an Internet celebrity of some sort. It resulted in her taking away 3 awards, the most of any blogger. One thing to note is that she is a full-time blogger, even though her blog doesn’t focus on any topic in particular. It’s a fascinating career for her, apparently she makes a fair bit of coin too.” (Howard 2009)
Malaysian field of blogging?

- The field of blogging and advertising articulate through BlogAdNet, key Lifestyle bloggers, and the Lifestyle blog – heteronomous actors & actants

- Process of domestication, enrolment (Abramson 1998)
Introducing the Evangelist Program, designed and created just so customers can keep tabs on the happenings and updates of their esteemed labels.

Be the first to find out about product launches, press conferences, events, freebies, promotions and lots more. Connect with other Angels and be part of an exclusive community, and enjoy the perks, benefits, side dishes (whatever you want to call it) which comes with being an Angel. Express your everlasting loyalty and show your unwavering support. All you have to do is sign up!

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Conclusions

• Lifestyle as a category is fluid, but pervasive
• Developing as a commercial blog-genre
• BlogAdNet is an important actant – ‘translating’ between the fields of blogging and advertising
• Internet practices are embedded in local cultures
References


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