

First SA blog survey results

 By [Simone Puterman](#)

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The results of Speak Up!, a survey of South Africa's blogger community by 24.com, conducted by imagineNATION Alliance, are in, giving a clearer picture of this group of 'vocal locals' who publish their thoughts and opinions online, regularly read and post comments on other blogs, and meet other bloggers offline.

From 24 October - 7 November 2008, nearly 20% of the estimated 5000 active bloggers in South Africa participated in the survey, making it the largest of its kind in the country. According to Arthur Goldstuck of World Wide Worx - an independent South African technology research and strategy organisation - as of January 2008, there were about 4000 active South African blogs that received more than 10.5 million page views and over 1.8 million unique users each month. The country's Internet users are reported to be 4.5 million.

Controversy

While there has been some controversy over [one particular slide of results](#) (and then a [second one](#)), Bizcommunity.com spoke to qualitative research analyst Vincent Hofmann, also an avid blogger, whose overall impression is that it is a statistically valid body of research, implemented in a credible manner and delivered as such in a concise manner.

However, continues Hofmann, "does it serve as an in-depth analysis? No. Does it give you some sense of where the blogging community is at? To some extent I'd say, yes. However my major concern is that the research findings do not explore the statistical findings, but are rather reiterations of the data collected.

"For instance, as income is always a hot topic, it is interesting to note, '42.5% earn more than R20 000 monthly with more than 15% earning more than R50 000 per month'. Wouldn't such data be interesting when compared with an average South African's salary? Wouldn't it also be fruitful for a global audience to understand why our blogging community is still so small. If one considers the large proportion of wealthy bloggers, one would have to assume that a primary enabler is logically access to technology, which a salary of above R15 000 would no doubt provide.

According to Hofman, the "most glaringly obvious result from this research is that we are looking at a very small, white, wealthy and educated community, who have the time to actively pursue a hobby which takes up a large portion of their day.

"The research also makes it very hard to believe that the blogosphere shall become more diverse. If it is a niche community of the moderately wealthy middle class white South Africans, then we are faced with a far larger uphill battle than we initially thought. Let us hope our readers are a more diverse bunch, lest we be faced with the same stories from the same SA communities forever."

The results

According to the 24.com survey, almost three-quarters of the respondents (73.4%) have attended a meeting of bloggers, or MOB. Among those who have attended a MOB:

- 25.9% have attended once;
- 39.9% have participated in more than one but less than five; and
- 34.2% have taken part in more than five MOB.

Urban, white and mature

According to the survey, there is an even split of men and women blogging, with 58% between 25 - 44 and 95% with either English or Afrikaans as their first language. Cape Town and Johannesburg/Pretoria are seemingly the epicentres for blogging in South Africa, accounting for more than 75% SA's active bloggers.

Internet veterans

Although many bloggers are newbies - with over 20% having blogged for less than one year - SA's blogosphere currently includes some sophisticated Internet users with:

- More than two-thirds having been on the Internet for at least a decade;
- One fifth having blogged for three or more years; and
- Over 40% having written at least one blog prior to their current one.

Wealthy, with kids

Among the respondents, 42.5% earn more than R20 000 monthly, with more than 15% earning more than R50 000 per month. Interestingly, 58% of these SA bloggers are married or live together and 46% of them have children.

Blog for fun, not money

Blogging, for the most part, is not currently about making money. According to the survey respondents, 60.7% blog to express themselves or have fun, while only 7.9% have a commercial motivation. More than 88% of the respondents admit to making no money from their blogs. Of those who earn money from blogging, around 85% of them earn R1 - 1000 and 15% earn between R1000 and R3000 each month. According to [Amanda Reekie of imagineNATION Alliance](#), a statistically insignificant amount of respondents (2.9%) indicated that they were earning in excess of R3000+ a month on their blogs. As far as other perks go, more than 24% have received free products, event invitations and/or free services as a result of their blog.

Investing time and passion, not money

It seems that blogging is an online hobby for most bloggers; a highly individualistic outlet and a significant time investment to thoughtfully and passionately express themselves. In fact, more than half of bloggers make one to five posts weekly. Although nearly 50% of bloggers contribute to just one blog, over 15% of bloggers claim to contribute to four or more blogs.

As far as investing financially in their blogs, over the past 12 months, 83% of these active SA bloggers spent R1 - 2000 and just 16% spent R2001 - 10 000. In terms of the time commitment involved in blogging:

- 65% spend between one to 10 hours each week on their blog;
- 52% blog throughout the day; and
- 52% of those spending 10 or more hours a week have children.

Traffic not important to most

Personal popularity and audience traffic do not seem to be huge drivers for bloggers. Although one fifth of bloggers claim to receive more than 30 comments on their blog each week, about 47% receive five or fewer comments on their blog each week. (A comparable number of comments are made by individual bloggers on other blogs during the week.) Only about 5% of bloggers in SA claim to have a monthly audience of more than 10 000.

In terms of actively driving traffic to their blogs, 36% of bloggers admitted to not doing so. Among those who do, the most popular blog promoting tools, outside of word-of-mouth, are local services Amatomu (30%) and Afrigator (24%).

Personal style, satisfaction

While most do not make much money blogging, the majority of these bloggers feel that blogging has had a positive impact on their lives, with 37.9% indicating that they derive personal fulfilment from blogging and more than one fifth see their blog as a space to express themselves. In terms of categorising their blog:

- 68% see their blogs as “personal”;
- 26% classify their blog as “professional” (about their industry and profession); and
- Only six% participate in a corporate blog on behalf of their company or organisation.

Interestingly, almost one quarter of respondents (23%) blog in more than one of the above categories. In terms of style, bloggers' personalities are uniquely reflected in their respective blogs, ranging from contemplative and quirky, to inspiring, informative and newsy.

Blog platforms and inspiration

Almost 40% of the respondents to the survey use the 24.com blog platform for their blogs, followed by WordPress.org or WordPress.com (29%) and Blogger.com (20%). In terms of finding material for their blogs, while the bulk of their inspiration comes from personal experiences (48%), bloggers have multiple sources including:

- Local and international media sites, and media releases (24%);
- Local and international blogs (14%);
- Suggestions from friends and readers (10.5%); and
- Events attended (10%).

Anonymity and new connections

It would seem that paradoxically, meeting people offline is a driver for congregating virtually in the blogosphere. Among those who have met other bloggers in-person offline, as a result of blogging, the types of interactions they have enjoyed include:

- A new friendship (35.6%)
- Shared interest groups (24.9%)
- Business / professional (24.3%)
- Charitable / community work (11.1%)

Interestingly, more than 55% of active bloggers identify themselves online. Among those who do not, the main reasons given for remaining anonymous are privacy (48%), wanting a separate online persona (27%) and personal safety (19%). Interestingly, 40% of the bloggers who do not use their real identity online claim to have met someone as a result of blogging.

The future of SA blogging

Although a relatively small portion of South Africa's total online audience, members of the country's blogosphere contribute toward a connected community of like-minded individuals. While the audience for blogs is currently small, the level of sophistication of bloggers in the country is rapidly increasing. For example, almost 40% have embedded videos (either their own or from a video service) on their blog(s) and over the past year more than 15% of bloggers have made a blog post from their mobile phone.

"Whatever you want to call them - outlets for modern-day diarists, writers, hobbyists, parents, industry experts, critics, activists, philosophers and observers of society and trends - blogs are self-empowering and an opportunity for individuals to contribute to the national zeitgeist," comments Matthew Buckland, GM of online publishing and social media at 24.com.

"South Africa's blogosphere is thriving, fuelling micro-publishing communities of like-minded individuals. This is publishing democracy in action. Far from being techies living in a techie world, bloggers are people who dabble in a virtual world, but very much value real world interactions. It seems that blogging is integrated with bloggers' offline and online lives."

"Blogging is set to become more of a mainstream phenomenon in the future, especially as [better revenue models emerge for bloggers](#) and as more affordable broadband access becomes available. With larger audiences, bigger communities and increasingly diverse participants, I would expect South Africa's bloggers to also make more friends, influence the opinions of others and mobilise other citizens to act, speak and participate, both on and offline," he concludes.

For detailed results, go to http://blogs.24.com/blogsurvey/results_home.htm, which also [profiles six bloggers](#) - [Dax from Relax with Dax](#), [Supagran from Supagran Sez](#), [Candy Tothill from Inside Candy](#), [Amanda and Brad from Whijo.net](#), [Emma from ses myl suid](#) and [Masonge from Mozzie.com](#) - in order to explore further the depth and breadth of blogging in SA.

The survey was run in association with socia media/blog aggregators Afrigator.com and Amatomu.com and online DVD rental company PushPlay.co.za. Bizcommunity.com and MoneywebLife are media partners.

Update 5 December 2008: 24.com has reissued the two slides and and marked them both clearly as "corrected", [apologising for the errors](#).

For more:

- Afrigator.com: [Search results for "blog survey"](#)
- ITWeb: [Bloggers shred blog survey](#)
- OfRelevance.com: [The blog survey \(was\) even worse than I thought](#)
- Imod.co.za: [SA Blog Survey - Correct Slide Released](#)
- Imod.co.za: [Is the SA Blog Survey null and void?](#)
- Justinhartman.com: [88% of SA bloggers make no money](#)
- Stii.co.za: [My sneak preview of the SA bloggers survey](#)
- Technorati.com: [State of the Blogosphere/2008](#)

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