Blogs in Slovakia

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2. Stanoviť si ciele práce a formulovať pracovné hypotézy.
3. Charakterizovať mediálnu situáciu na Slovensku.
4. Charakterizovať skúmané subjekty.
5. Na základe etnografického výskumu a dotazníkov, analyzovať príčiny čo Slovákov vedie k blogom a prečo sa stávajú tak horlivými blogermi.
6. Verifikovať hypotézy.
7. Z analýzy vyvodiť závery a doporučenia pre budúci výskum.

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ABSTRAKT

Slovensko je jeden z príkladov strednej a východnej Európy, kde krajiny trpeli dlho pod nadvládou komunizmu a kde média boli silno podriadené vláde. Slovenská mediálna scéna prešla zložitým vývojovým procesom. V posledných rokoch sa stále viac a viac Slovákov upína k blogom, čo sú pravidelne upravované internetové stránky obsahujúce zápisky zoradené podľa dátumu v chronologickom poradí. Blogy sa v krátkom čase stali tak populárnymi nie len preto, že ponúkajú lacnú a relatívne ľahkú formu sebazverejnenia sa, ale aj vďaka tomu, že obsahom sú prístupné celosvetovému publiku na World Wide Webe. Blogy určite umožňujú Slovákom otvárať nové brány v komunikácii, kde neexistujú žiadne hranice a ľudia môžu debatovať aj o citlivých témach v nikdy nekončiacej sa konverzácii. Blogy ponúkajú priestor v demokracii a k vyjadreniu vlastných myšlienok, čo doposiaľ neexistovalo v žiadnom médiu.

V mojej práci sa venujem najnovšiemu mediálnemu fenoménu na Slovensku– blogom. Podujala som sa odhaliť a analyzovať nebývalé zmeny, ktoré sa odohrávajú na Slovenskej mediálnej scéne. Pomocou etnografickej štúdie a dotazníka sú mojími prvotnými záujmami nájsť dôvody prečo sú blogy tak populárne medzi Slovákmi a vysvetliť čo ženie Slovákov sa stať tak horlivými blogermi.

Kľúčové slová: blog, bloger, Slovensko, Slovák, blogosféra

ABSTRACT

Slovakia is one example of Central and Eastern European countries that have been suffering for long from the communist legacy of media subordination to the government. The Slovakian media scene has come through a difficult developing process. In the past several years more and more Slovaks turn to blogs, which are frequently modified Web-Pages containing dated entries listed in reverse chronological sequence. Blogs, within a short time period, have gone from relative uncertainty to enormous popularity not just because they enable easy, inexpensive self-publication of content for a potentially unlimited audience on World Wide Web. But indeed they enable Slovaks to open up new frontiers to negotiate the right to alternative sources of information and offer them new spaces of expression and deliberation that did not exist before. Blogs have become for some parts of the Slovak audience a new public sphere where people can argue about sensitive topics, fact-check arguments and rebut them in a never-ending conversation.

In my research paper, I am willing to examine the phenomenon of blogs in Slovakia to uncover and analyze the unprecedented changes that are occurring within the Slovakian media landscape. Through an ethnographic study and a questionnaire, my primary concern is to try to find out the reasons behind the popularity of blogs among Slovaks and to explain the driving forces that have made of many Slovaks avid bloggers.

Keywords: blog, weblog, blogger, blogosphere, Slovakia, Slovaks

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Volda, April 28. 2008

Katarina Ludrovska

Motto

"The best thing to learn something is to share the information with other people".

-        Eric T., www.internetducttape.com

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INTRODUCTION

Communication in humans' society has been changing for ages. The most significant developments have caused a movement forward in humans' history of expression: hieroglyphics, alphabets, papyrus, The Gutenberg press, newspapers, telegraphy, telephony, radio, television, the Internet and the Web. The evolution of blogs and blogging over the last few years may turn out to be an important part in humans' history of communication too.

In the past century the mainstream media grew to power and influence. They have made their voices heard, but not always everyone's voice is heard. The famous journalist A. J. Liebling said "Freedom of the media is limited to those who own one" (Kline&Burstein, 2005, Introduction). While niche and micro media have been growing for years in print, on talk radio, on websites, on TV, as a challenge to mainstream media monopoly-blogging has begun to represent a significant qualitative change in the contest (Kline&Burstein, 2005, Introduction). The professionals still have control over the biggest and most powerful mainstream media, but everyone has now a meaningful shot in being heard too.

Today, in the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century the medium finally became a message and blogs, as this medium, really deserve an attention in their own right as a special kind of global, immediate, mass idea producer medium. The political, social and cultural effects of blogging have analogous trends within the world of business, economics, pharmaceutical companies, automobile manufacturers, fashion brands, snack foods and others. Kline sees them as they are reaching the collective wisdom of online communities (Kline&Burstein, 2005, Introduction). Mayor daily newspapers in Slovakia have invited readers to use blogs to become "citizen journalists" and participate in reporting the news.

Media in Slovak society play generally an essential and defining role in democracy, as wherever they exist in the World. In this thesis I will try to point out the main problems that the mass media in countries of Central and Eastern Europe are facing, mainly Slovakia, in which there has been a persistence of communist and even pre-communist approaches to the collection, presentation and dissemination of news.

In the theoretical part of the thesis I will introduce Slovakia, as one example of Central and Eastern European countries that have been suffering for long from the communist legacy of media subordination to the government. Public and private media as radio and television have been facing to complex process of democratization and today, after fifteen

years, Slovak mainstream media are still encountering obstacles that hinder them from accomplishing their mission of informing and raising the consciousness of their public. The most significant change has made old-traditional media, which tried to re-invent themselves after the collapse of communism. Especially the public television and radio, which came through a difficult process of reformation from the state-run propaganda broadcast era of the communist regimes.

Slovakia suffered first from a communist legacy of subordination of the media to the government. The experience of state-censorship and strict regulation during communism, and a total absence of individual political freedoms and market competition are still very vital in people's minds. After the Slovak Republic had declared its sovereignty in 1993, Slovakia had been suffering from an authoritarian government. Mainstream media were servants to the government when journalists were members of the political parties in the same time. Moreover, Minárik wrote that there has been also a strong impact of the most recent experience of authoritarian methods, massive manipulation of public media and frightening of private media by government dominated by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) (Minárik, 2000, p.5). The talk of state-censorship, individual freedom, deregulation and market competition is not old at all in Slovakia as it is in the case in other Central and East European countries. Slovakia has being going through a difficult process of democratisation throughout the last fifteen years. One of the crucial tasks of the media in a democratic society is to work as a watchdog of the public interest. The traditional media have their limits, thus new media bring wider opportunities in terms of freedom of expression and democracy.

I will discuss the television, radio and Internet situation in Slovakia in the theoretical part of my thesis. I will describe their process of democratisation since the first Slovak government was elected in 1994. I will especially focus on the Internet in my research paper, because it encompasses new possibilities for the Slovak society. More specifically, I am going to examine the blogs' phenomenon.

The invention and growth of the Internet are the biggest change in communication, since the advent of television (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p.1). Internet is a collection of emerging technologies like forums, news groups, mailing lists, personal and corporate blogs that allow social networking by offering users the ability to add and edit content. Internet is opened for everyone to reach a never-ending amount of information. The rise of the Internet

created tremendous opportunities and particularly blogs are now the fastest growing media on the planet (Cooke, 2006, p.1). The Slovak government has started gaining more and more interest in the Internet. They set aside money every year to buy the new computers for schools, for example. Or they organize trainings for students, lectors, professors and so one, to teach them how to use computers and PC programs. Nowadays, it is already not enough to have access to Internet, broadband Internet is required. The particularity in Slovakia might be regarded the fact, that Slovakia still doesn't have any Internet legislation. From 1990s' there has been no government policy which would ratify an Internet law. On the other side, without any legislation Slovaks have an unlimited freedom in expression and any limitations concerned with democracy in the Web.

Slovaks are using more and more blogs and this rising popularity of the new technological tool is quite intriguing. Therefore, I will try to investigate why weblogs have gained such a great popularity among people in Slovakia. Is creating a weblog a process of self-expression, personal publishing, a diary, amateur journalism, the biggest disruptive technology since e-mail, an online community or alternative media? I will explain what actually a blog is and I will describe its history and structure too.

Hugh Hewitt, a well known blogger, compares in his book the blogs with Protestant Reformation. He claims that the sixteen and twenty-first centuries have a dramatic element in common – the birth of a revolution in communication technology. The cultural, political and economic transformations that emerged out of the Reformation and have affected the course of Western civilisation ever since were fuelled by the advent of an extraordinary device: the movable-type printing press. The ability to publish books inexpensively decentralized the power of knowledge and forever changed the structure of society. Information were spread from the hands of the elite to ordinary people. And bloggers now, for Hugh Hewitt, represent the power of revolution in communication these days (Hewitt, 2005, xix).

Blogs have opened new frontiers for democracy and freedom of expression. They have empowered ordinary citizens to become fact checkers and analysts. The blogs, as new medium, are based on amateur journalism. People are talking to each other and sharing experiences, knowledge, sources and ideas. Blogs encourage a mediocrity citizen to be a watchdog of media, politician and society too. In my work I would like to talk about blogs, as the newest media phenomenon in Slovakia.

I will mention bloggers and theirs audiences, as the new social communities. I will deal with the blogosphere as a network and introduce for the readers a blogs' situation in Slovakia. In the last chapter I will discuss the core question: Why do people blog? In the conclusion of the theoretical part I will sum up the theory and I will come up with a major work hypothesis and set up the research question:

RQ: Why do people blog in Slovakia?

In the practical part of my thesis I will examine the phenomenon of blogs in Slovakia. I will attempt to uncover and analyze the unprecedented changes that are occurring within the Slovakian blogosphere. Through an ethnographic study and a questionnaire, I will try to find out the reasons behind the popularity of blogs among Slovaks and explain the driving forces that have made of many Slovaks avid bloggers. I will discuss a possible solutions and remedies for possible adjustments of my research. I will give my personal suggestions for future research here as well.

In the last part of my thesis, I will talk about how Slovakia, as a post-communist country, turned into independent and democratic country, where blogs – a new media phenomenon- have given Slovaks a tool of democracy. Slovaks have become independent and outspoken. Blogs have finally opened new frontiers for Slovaks- after so many years of repression- for freedom of expression.

In the conclusion I will summarize the key- findings and I will attempt to open up new questions. I will set its contribution for theory and praxis and I will talk about the evaluation of research and risks which showed up throughout the research process of my Master's thesis.

I. THEORETICAL PART

1   MEDIA SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

1.1   Review of Slovak Media Scene

The idea of a free press is cornerstone in democratic nations. However, there is little research carried out about Slovakia and its relationship to electronic media, as television and radio or even Internet and the formation of stable democracy. After 1993, when Slovakia became independent we don't know much about new media and democracy. What we know for sure is that the level of state influence in the Slovak media has remained high.

Till the end of 1980's, radio and television was under strict state censorship. After the Second World War the censorship influence was remarkable minor. However, during communism the communist party was the only one state organ who dictated to the media. The Revolution after 1989 brought a fundamental change in radio and television broadcast programme. The communist hegemony was vanished from Slovak media scene. In 1993 Slovakia gained its autonomy, thus Slovaks thought the times for freedom of expression had begun. However, the 1994-1998 period is well known term of the office of the government led by Vladimír Mečiar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), who was marked by authoritarian tendencies, submission and use of the public media by the government and conflicts with the private media independent from the state (Mináik, 2000, p.14).

Andrej Školkay (Školkay in Minárik, 2000) listed several authoritarian methods in regard to the mass media that were applied in Slovakia in 1994-1998 period. The list included changes in the legal system, technical arguments against the renewal of broadcasting licence, economic pressure, dismissal of management and journalists working in public broadcasting institutions and the state news agency, establishment of own newspapers and magazines (owned by government), direct and indirect financial support of loyal media, appointment of government supporters into supervisory boards of public broadcasting institutions, refusals to give information or access to information to journalists from critical media, awards to loyal media and journalists and collection of damaging information about and intimidation of critical journalists (Školkay in Minárik, 2000, p.14). Minárik claims that the government's hostility towards the independent media was also aggravated by a general lack of experience in dealing with a newly independent and increasingly self-confident media

especially with those media determined to act as a watchdog of the public interest (Minárik, 2000, p.14).

Slovakia was the only post-communist country described by Milton as a "particularly difficult place for the operation of the newly free media", in a comparative study of mass media in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (Milton in Minárik, 2000, p. 14). At that time a number of international organisations classified Slovakia as a country with only partial freedom of the media due to the governmental activities aimed at limiting or obstructing media freedom (Minárik, 2000, p.15). One of the main problems of the mass media in the countries in the process of democratisation of Central Europe "Have been the persistence of communist and even pre-communist approaches to the collection, presentation and dissemination of news", according to Milton (Milton in Minárik, 2000, p. 7).

Minárik wrote that the endurance of old approaches to the news has resulted in and can be illustrated by rigid presentation of the news, which often lacks dynamics; conformity and servile attitudes and lack of critical and adversarial approach to the government; under-reporting of explanatory elements and reliance on official viewpoints and attitudes. He saw the essential problem in Central and Eastern Europe is the unwillingness or inability to reconstruct the institution of the free media comprehensively, that the state continues to exert excessive control of public television and radio (Minárik, 2000, p.17).

1.1.1 Television

The first experimental TV broadcast was realized in Bratislava in 1953. In 1956, television broadcasted experimentally in Košice. The 3. November 1956 became memorial date, because it began the first regular television broadcast in Slovakia. The first programme in the TV was live broadcast from the Bratislava's PKO celebration. Throughout years after 1956, Slovak television had had to broadcast mainly about political successes of the socialism and about the ideal socialistically citizen. Around 1968 came a political release in Slovakia. However, after the invasion of Warsaw pact's troops, the situation went worse again. The TV studios were taken over communist's supremacy and the broadcast was aborted. This hard censorship had last till 1989 when Revolution finally changed the state's establishment.

In May 1991, Slovakia became the first post-communist country in Central and Eastern Europe which adopted the law on public broadcasting institutions. This event might technically create more independent electronic mass media. Unfortunately, the reality was different. Independent and public status of Slovak Television and Slovak Radio became only a formal attribute to cover indirect submission and to control by the government through its parliamentary majority. Minárik discussed in his work that the transition from a state broadcaster to a truly independent public service operator was successfully blocked (Minárik, 2000, p.20). Moreover, the public broadcasters became controlled and even run by the government. The institutional modification allowed the government to carry out changes in personnel not only at the board level, but also within the broadcasters and their news programmes. The right to appoint the directors of Slovak Television and Slovak Radio was transferred to the HZDS dominated parliament. Several observers of the Slovak media concluded that as a consequence of the institutional changes Slovak Television worked as a tool of HZDS propaganda in the 1994-1998 period and particularly in the run-up to the 1998 elections (Školkay in Minárik, 2000, p.20).

The main private television station TV Markíza offered completely different and more balanced news programmes comparing to the STV. TV Markíza started broadcasting in August 1996 covering nearly two thirds of the Slovak territory (Minárik, 2000, p.22). Minárik stated that TV Markíza generally offered more balanced and impartial news service than the STV, but Školkay pointed out that TV Markíza became a political issue for its role in creating a positive image for the newly established Party of Civic Understanding (SOP). TV Markíza became also directly and personally associated with the SOP (Školkay in Minárik, 2003a). For example Viera Rusková, the wife of TV Markíza's managing director Pavol Rusko, held a senior position at TV Markíza's News and Current Affairs Department. Later, she became a candidate for the SOP in the parliamentary elections and eventually happened to be elected a member of the parliament. The other example of close relation between TV Markíza and SOP is Michal Arpáš, a senior sports journalist at TV Markíza. He was another SOP parliamentary candidate coming from TV Markíza. TV Markíza provided airtime mainly for SOP politicians: Rudolf Schuster, Igor Presperín and Pavol Hamžík were three leading politicians of the SOP, who belonged to the eight most frequent featured politicians on TV Markíza's news (Minárik, 2003a, p.10).

Today situation in private and public television in Slovakia is fortunately totally different. From 2001, Slovakia has been under European Union experts' constant surveillance. Laws had to be signed and accepted. They may guarantee freedom of expression and democracy in media in Slovakia. Minárik examined about media situation in last years "Media regulations in Slovakia forbid cross-ownership of mass media at the national level. Media concentration issues have not appeared on the agenda of political discourse, although some strong media groups have been formed: cross-media group around TV Markíza involving also radio station- Radio Okay, daily newspaper Narodná Obroda and a weekly magazine Markíza." He thinks that the enterprises of the media group around TV Markíza formally operate as separate companies and are not linked by ownership (Minárik, 2003b, p.2).

There are two channels under the umbrella of the public television Slovenská televízia (Slovak Television, STV): Jednotka (1) and Dvojka (2). Slovakia has the national private terrestrial, satellite digital, cable television station TV Markíza (owned by CME Media Enterprises B.V., A.R.J. and Media Invest). Another significant TVs are the terrestrial, cable TV Joj (owned by J&T Bank) and satellite, cable, terrestrial news television TA3 (J&T Finance Group). Some specialized national or multiregional television stations are also on the market. There is one national TV station NAUTIK TV, which broadcasts only via satellite. Its programme is focused at on everything related to water. The teleshopping TVA television channel broadcasts in major cities. TV MUSIC BOX broadcasts only music programmes digitally via satellite and then through KDS technology. Moooby TV broadcasts music and entertainment and ETV– medicus broadcast educational programmes via satellite. In addition to these multiregional stations, there are over one hundred local or city television stations, info channels and teleshopping channels (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

The most popular channel in 2006 were TV Markíza (between 31- 36 % of market share with a positive trend of growing), STV1 (18- 21 % with a negative trend), TV Joj (15-17 %, stable), STV2 (5- 6 %) and TA3 (1,3- 2%). Czech television stations attracted about 8- 9 % of the population and the other TV stations about 14- 15 % of the viewers (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

In 2006 three quarters of Slovaks watched television broadcast every day and in general, more than half of Slovaks consider TV as the most trustworthy source of information, followed by radio (19 %), newspapers (15 %) and Internet (12 %). The most trusted

medium (as the institution) has always been the public Slovak Radio in the last 15 years. In the period between December 2001 and April 2005, the level of public trust in the public radio was between 74 and 78 % (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

1.1.2 Radio

Czechoslovakia was one of the countries which has started its radio broadcast 18. May 1923. The first radio transmission was from Prague. In 1964 law no. 17/1964 Zb. got through about Czechoslovak radio. It was about "political and cultural education" and radio's subordination to the communist party. This law was in office till 1991, when the situation in the public radio broadcaster changed in Slovakia. The Slovak Radio handled to preserve more independence from the government and provide more alternative opinions and more equal section of airtime between the government and opposition parties in the period of 1994- 1998. However, despite giving airtime to alternative opinions unlike the STV, the monitoring of the Slovak Radio news programmes by the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists showed "Biased selection of news, showing the ruling coalition in a good light and the limitation of opposing opinions by minimising the airtime given to the opposition." Školkay said that "Investigative and critical journalism disappeared from the Slovak Radio news programmes" (Školkay in Minárik, 2000, p.26).

Minárik indicates that there were more than 20 private radio stations in Slovakia. However, their political influence was limited due to several reasons. He pointed out that most of the private broadcasters were small regional stations. Only two private radio stations – Fun Radio and Radio Twist – had a large territorial coverage, which was close to the coverage of Slovak Radio. The Radio Twist news programmes devoted less airtime to the news, but presented the government more critically or neutrally comparing with Slovak Radio. According to Minárik, the private media in Slovakia fought for freedom of expression and simultaneously for their own independence from the government. Thus, their decision to be agents of democracy and provide more fair news coverage than the public media was not accidental as it was in the self-interest of the market-based media. If the role of the media is understood as being the watchdog of the government, than the media only naturally incline to defend their editorial independence from the government (Minárik, 2000, p.29).

Slovak Radio began its "change to modern" broadcast in September 2004. The new programs' structure was supposed to be more dynamic and of better quality in reporting and journalism. Voláková explored that according to these changes, Radio Twist, FUN Radio and Radio Koliba became equal competitors to, in the meantime dominant, Slovak Radio (Voláková, 2005, p.23).

SRo is divided in seven radios now. Radio Regina represents three regional studios with regional information. Radio Regina is a family radio with a high ratio of folk music. Radio Devín broadcasts arts and culture and mainly classical music. Radio FM broadcasts youth programmes, as well as popular and alternative music. Radio FM broadcasts for young people aged 14 to 25 years. Radio Patria broadcasts for national minorities. Radio Slovakia International is an international broadcast in foreign languages, including broadcast in Slovak language for the Slovaks living abroad. It has limited its foreign broadcast significantly in summer 2006. Radio INET is broadcasting via Internet (Voláková, 2005, p.24).

Since almost all radio stations changed their programme strategy, only Radio Okey stayed the same. Its audience has been in the same position since 2006, what is 20%. The newest radio station is Jemné Melódie (Soft Melodies), which was launched in 2006. Jemné Melódie has become the fourth most favourite in Slovak audience in a very short time period (Voláková, 2005, p.29).

There were 23 radio stations in Slovakia in 2006, in addition to four domestic public radio stations. This is almost a fixed number in the last few years, although, obviously, some radio stations were established some vanished or changed their names. Out of these 23 private radio stations, seven are multiregional radio stations. They are: Radio Okey, Radio Express, Viva, Fund Radio, Radio Lumen and Radio 7 (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

More than 85 % of the population aged above 14 years listens to radio broadcasts according to a long-term research made by European Journalism Centre. Thus, it is the second most popular medium after television broadcast in Slovakia. The Slovak Radio broadcasts news and current affairs for listeners aged between 25 and 49 years (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

1.1.3 Internet situation in Slovakia

The number of Internet users in Slovakia is increasing rapidly. Since in the beginning of 2007 Internet has 1 620 221 Internet users, in December 2007 it was already 1 716 531 Internet users. AIMmonitor stated that Slovakia was located at the 4th place in Internet penetration within Central and East European countries (GfK, 2008a). According to GfK survey, there are 42% of Internet users in Slovakia, what is more than in Hungary or in Poland. Slovakia leads mainly in Internet connection from work and from schools. However, Slovakia falls behind in home connection (GfK, 2008a). Compared to Central and Eastern European countries, Slovaks connect more from Internet cafes than it is the case in other countries (GfK, 2008b). The survey affirms also that Internet users are mostly young people to 29 years old. 93% of them are in age between 15 and 19 years old. The GfK survey also showed that 94% of Slovak citizens older than 60 don't use the Internet at all (GfK, 2008b). Almost two thirds of Slovak citizens do not utilise Internet at all, and about half of this number does not see any reason why to use the Internet (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

The Internet market in Slovakia changed after several international Internet companies entered Slovakia in the beginning of the 21st century. This has lead to a concentration of the Internet market. Larger companies bought many ISPs and many local providers have merged with big ones. Four companies had under control most of the Internet market. There were state owned Slovak Telecom and private Nextra/Telenor, Euroweb, ViaPVT, Kiwwi and Slovanet (Brázda, 2001).

Currently, approximately 46% of Slovak households possess computer at home. The highest number of computers is situated around big towns as Bratislava, Kosice and Zilina. The lowest number of households which possess computer at home is around Banska Bystrica and Trnava district (GfK, 2008b). According to Mediaresearch there are more men who are using internet services (51,65 %) than women (Mediaresearch, 2007).

There has been made no survey about weblogs in Slovakia yet. However, to use an example from Europe: in Germany, weblogs are still less popular than in United States of America. Only 10% of respondents were interested in weblogs (Bleskovky.sk, 2007). Worldwide weblogs are used by more then 50 million internet users. The most common

language in which blogs are published is English (34%), and the rest: 32% is in Japanese, Korean and Chinese[1] (Šebo, 2007).

Internet has become irreplaceable. All daily newspapers have their own websites now. There is an increasing trend towards pay-per-read services in case of commentaries and longer articles of newspapers. Most media websites offer limited versions of their regular content, but some, particularly with very low circulation like Slovo, publish online full texts of all articles. The daily Sme was the first daily that established its own site for bloggers in 2004. Some articles from this site are being published in this daily. There are several specialised news portals in Slovakia as Bleskovky.sk (produced by Nový Čas newspapers, which has been for long the most popular news portal in Slovakia), Webnoviny.sk (produced by SITA news agency) and the more recent and professional news portal Aktualne.sk (European Journalism Centre, 2007).

It might be seen as a problem that Slovakia has no special legislation related to Internet content. The existing legislation and the main press law might be applied. "There is a law on advertising that prohibits sending advertising through unsolicited bulk emails, legislation on protection against libel and other laws may be valid for Internet too. This legislation has not been made with the Internet in mind and it is quite difficult to use it in that environment. Enforcement of such legislation is complicated by the fact that the Slovak authorities are not ready to deal with Internet technologies. For example, the police has not been able to find the authors of a Web page with fascist content (the page has been registered at Slovak TLD authority) or act against the authors of unsolicited bulk emails containing advertising," told Norbert Brázda (Brázda, 2001).

Eva Vozárová from Trend magazine called this "unusual matter" with no-existing law for Internet a "grey zone" (Vozárová, 2008). The press law form 2004 might carry a definition of a new law, but Ministry of Culture and the Slovak syndicate of journalists haven't still come to an agreement, thus Internet will stay in the "grey zone" hereafter. The newest press law had ambition to create the functional internet's legislation, however the

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[1] Available in Table of Figures

Ministry of Culture put a claus, that the Internet news were considered as a periodical press only when it was its electronic version. The Slovak syndicate of journalists proposed to widen existing press law that Internet media would run as a standard publishing companies. The Slovak syndicate of journalists arguments that journalists who publish on the Web might have the same rules as traditional media journalists. Association of Publishers of Periodical Press had the converse solution. They wanted that the Internet, as a medium, might be excluded from the press law at all. "As long as the wise solution doesn't exist, it's pointless to try to find the law for Internet publishing", said Miloš Nemeček, a chairman of Association of Publishers of Periodical Press (Vozárová, 2008). Missing Internet legislation might be very comfortable for media too. Journalists who write only on the Web don't have the protection of source of information, but they have maybe more- an unlimited field of activities. There is no control on the Internet. No state authority is responsible for text which is published on the Web. However, some media analysts express that for people and media it's enough to use the Civil Code. This might make Internet in Slovakia to be more democratic now than in European countries around.

2   WE HAVE GOT A BLOG

2.1   What is a Blog?

A blog is a new medium which has become more and more popular during the last years. Blogs have spread out through Web to all around the World. First, blogs were created in the United States of America, and then blogs expanded to everywhere. The reasons why blogs became so popular are many, however probably the most significant reason is theirs simplicity. A weblog can be created by everyone. It doesn't matter how old are you, or if you are a Muslim or a Christian, or whether you are employed or unemployed. To create a blog you don't need so much: a computer with Internet access, the ability to write and read, and a passion for new information and storytelling. Then, as many bloggers say, you might like writing and you might post your thoughts frequently. There exist already thousand types of blogs. For instance there are computers' blogs, mommy blogs, business blogs; blogs about nature, pets, cosmetics, mobiles, flowers, cooking, photographs and many more. Some mainstream media already found out that they might get very easy, accessible and trustworthy source of the newest information through blogs. Blogs provide to the mainstream media day-to-day information about the newest problems occurring worldwide. When a problem arises, a natural disaster as a typhoon or a flood for example, the ordinary people are participants. Thus they have first-hand and unique information and photos about an event. Last year when floods occurred in the eastern part of Slovakia, bloggers who live in that area filled their blogs with sad stories and pictures about the tragedy.

Luckily for journalists, there is almost an endless supply of different subject matters encapsulated within the structure and the practice of blogging. Indeed, blogging is best defined through the structure and practice of it, rather than through any type of content within it. Blogging might turn to be a new form of journalism and bloggers have already become, for some people, "citizen journalists". Bloggers might cover more interesting events than the journalists themselves. On the other side, there is a criticism about blogging too. That it might don't have appropriate quality of grammar and spelling structure, for example. Critics complain about the high amount of grammar errors in the text. However, one thing is certain, that blogs have opened unlimited space for freedom of speech. Moreover, "Blogs present a significant topic of study because they provide the opportunity to study media audi-

ences as content producers instead of content consumers", said Mark Tremayne (Tremayne, 2007, p.21).

So, what is a blog? Is it a cluster of text, audio and video postings with comments, reverse chronological order on a Web page? Is it collection of one's mind opinions? Topical news posts? Personal thoughts? Cites of the day? An instant magazine with feedback?

One definition of blogs doesn't exist. Perhaps as a factor of their newness, there is still a significant debate about the exact definition of a blog. We can find a thousand of bloggers who define a blog with different words. Susan C. Herring and others describe it as a "Frequently modified webpages containing data entries listed in reverse chronological sequence" (Lenhart, 2005, p.3). Rebecca Blood, one of the first historians of the blog, calls them "filters", because they "filter" information from other source on the Web (Rodzvilla et al., 2002). Zizi Papacharissi states that the weblog is a "Webpage that consist of regular or daily posts, arranged in reverse chronological order and archived" (Rodzvilla et al., 2002, p.21). Blogs have been described as everything from "Microportals" and "latest Internet craze" (Rodzvilla et al., p. 25-29) to "WunderKammer" or "Cabinet of wonders" (Lenhart, 2002, p.6), to a "Transparent and public web-based soapbox and feedback system" (Lenhart, 2002, p.6). Although, Evan Williams, creator of blogger.com, uses a different and compelling definition when he reflects, that the core concepts of blogging are "Frequency, Brevity and Personality" (Lenhart, 2002, p.7). For the purposes of my Master's thesis I will use Herring's reverse chronological order definition that defines blogs as "Frequently modified webpages containing individual entries displayed in reverse chronological order" (Lenhart, 2004, p.7). To sum it up, blogs have many definitions, but they have to have few common features which specify them: frequently updated records which are chronologically arranged and saved. Gina Trapani, a blogger, who belongs to the 30 World's top bloggers said "A successful blog is like a hungry pet that needs to be walked, fed, washed, cleaned up after, and loved regularly" (Banks, 2008, p.25).

Blogs in Slovakia have spread out very fast. First there were Slovaks, who created blogs as Web pages, then they found Blogger.com and finally mainstream media itself have offered the possibility to own a blog. To have an idea of what a blog is in Slovakia, have a look at these sites:

- www.kavicky.blogspot.com

- www.field.sk

- www.weissova.blog.sme.sk

- www.speedman.sk

Each blog presents information and often opinion. Some blogs carry advertising. Some blogs have multiple posters. And most of them allow readers to make comments on postings, which are normally brief and displayed in a reverse chronological order. Most postings are primarily text, but there are blogs with graphics and sound. Nowadays, there are more and more blogs with video.

Viegas discovered three types of weblogs in her research: journals, filters and knowledge blogs.

 Journals – a personal diaries which, according to recent surveys, are the over-whelming majority of blogs (70,4%). In journals, authors mainly report their lives and inner thoughts and feelings (Viegas, 2005).

The term 'filter' is meant to describe the process undertaken by this type of blogger when he or she brings certain items to reader's attention and ignores others (Tremayne, 2007, x). If personal blogs are focused inward filter blogs are more outwardly focused. Filters blogs' function is to direct readers to other websites or at least to bring information from those sites to readers' attention. Two of the most common types of filter blogs are those focused on external public events or current events (12,6%).

The knowledge blogs (3%) are mainly about politics or technology events (Viegas, 2005).

2.1.1   History of Blogging

Not just a definition of blog is hard to find, but the blog's history is still unknown as well. Rebecca Blood, as a first who wrote about blogs' history claims, that the year 1997 was the moment when Jorn Barger coined the term "weblog" as a combination of "Web" and "log" to refer to a collection of sites that were already "logging" the annotated links that marked the roams of an individual around the World Wide Web (Rodzvilla et al., 2002). Glenn Fleishman noticed "Take the phrase "Web log" and apply the linguistic behav-iour known as false splitting-move a letter from one word to another- and you get a phrase

"we blog" " (Rodzvilla et al., 2002, p.107). Shortly thereafter, Cameron Barrett published the list on CamWorld and others maintaining similar sides began sending their URLs to him. In the beginning of 1999, 23 weblogs were already known. Suddenly after, a community sprang up. Peter Merholtz announced in 1999 that he was going to start pronouncing it "wee-blog", and to refer to weblog editors as "bloggers" (Rodzvilla et al., 2002).

When trying to identify the first blog, some scholars pointed to Tim Berners-Lee's original site, one of the very first sites on the World Wide Web, which for the first few years of the Web's existence, kept track of new sites added to the network in the first filter-style blog (Rodzvilla et. al, 2002). Others suggest that "Simon Firth (1998) in an essay posted on Salon, credits Carolyn Burke with the first online journal in January 1995" (Lenhart, 2005, p. 160).

In July 1999 Pitas, the first free build-your-own-weblog tool was launched, and suddenly there were hundreds of bloggers. In August of the same year, Pyra released Blogger.com and the growing number of blogs turned to explosion (Lenhart, 2005).

As we can see, the original weblogs were link-driven sites. Each was a mixture of unique content, links, comments, personal thoughts and essays. Weblogs could be created just by people who already know how to make a website. Many of the current blogs still keep this original style. However, more and more bloggers have chosen to be a part of electronic communities known as Blogger, Typepad, LiveJournal or Sme.blog.sk, Blog.pravda.sk, Blog.hnonline.sk, which are simplified wepages in the process of keeping a weblog. It seems to be much easier to just pick up a template and start to write, as you write an e-mail. Postings are much easier to publish now. And blogging continues to grow in popularity and impact.

2.1.2   Structure of the Blog

The visual aspect of the blog may be divided into three main parts[2]:

- Header

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[2]Please see Table of Pictures

- Post column

- Sidebars

A header takes the top of the weblog page (Lenhart, 2005, p.11). It holds a title of the page – the name of the page. Name "Všetko pre iPod, iTunes a podcast" characterises the content or what the blog is mainly about. The name may be just a bunch of words, which have meaning only for its author too. The header may contain a subhead or a quotation which may better explain the page's content for potential reader. Depending on the visage of the blog, the header may have an image or a graphical element[3]. The graphics serves as a background for a title or as an additional element adjacent to the title. Graphic elements may provide the more attractive look to the weblog or they may serve as a distinction from other million weblog pages. A clock, date and day of the week may be a part of the header.

A post column, or simply said the posts, are usually situated below the header. Blogs often use columnar layouts of one, two or more columns[4]. If there is more than one column in the layout, usually the largest or the central column contains the frequently updated posts, or blog entries created and uploaded by the blog author. This is the part of the weblog that makes a blog different from a static website. The posts generally have a date at the top of each post, followed by a title that describes the content of the entry. Below the title is the body of the post. The example[5] shows the posts with a text, image, video and comments. The example of the post contains also a link within the body of the post, generally represented by an underlined text of a different colour from the main text. This link can be external link, linking to other websites, or to other blogs or external documents like PDFs hosted on other servers.

Links may also be internal links, linking to previous posts within the blog, serving as a reminder to the reader of when a topic has been covered before, and allowing new readers

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[3] Please see the Table of Pictures

[4] Available in the Table of Pictures

[5] Please see the Table of Pictures

to quickly come into a conversation without the blogger needing to repeat him- or herself. Lenhart suggests that bloggers may also link internally or externally to audio or video files. Blog postings are usually signed with the name or pseudonym of the blogger (Lenhart, 2005, p.13).

Under the text, graphics or video you can see "comments". This entry is common for almost all weblog sites. Through postings, the blogger gives the opportunity to others to comment on his blog. Comments are very helpful for bloggers to progress in their postings too. On the other side, it might make the blogger sad, when he is criticised by others. Some people just need to provoke and they might use a verbal attack. The fact is that the blogger is who has the absolute control of the comments on his or her website. It is a possibility to just delete the content. There are plenty of variations how to make site as much attractive for audience as possible. Some bloggers, in acknowledgement of their readership and to counter the subordinate nature of the default comment display, may include automatically generated links in the blog's sidebar to the most recent comments. By bringing the comments to the top part of the main blog page where they are constantly visible, the blogger puts reader comments on the same expressive footing as the author's own blog posts (Lenhart, 2005, p.15). Other authors expressed that comments belong only for readers, thus bloggers shouldn't have the power to change it or delete it.

The bottom part of each blog post may also contain a permalink and a trackback link. As the name suggests, permalinks are permanent links to specific blog entries and they allow the author or other bloggers to refer back to a specific post in their own entries, or to share the entry with others by forwarding the link through other means like email or instant messaging. Trackbacks, also sometimes called "pings", are functions whereby a blogger write about something he saw or read in another blog and then send a notification back to the first blog with a link to their post (Lenhart, 2005, p.16). The study from Japan proved that the most influential relation between bloggers is the trackback-trackback relation (Fukurawa, 2006, p.288). The other pages have on the post's bottom author's name (linked, so you can find a profile after a click) and the hour, date and day when the post was created.

In addition to the header and post columns, mostly weblog pages contain at least one sidebar and sometimes more. Lenhart wrote that sidebars are the depot of important and less frequently updated area (Lenhart, 2005, p.17). Sidebars usually bear a picture and a profile of the author. On Blog.sme.sk it is a required to publish your whole name with your

photo on the page. Then you can find here entries which may say more about author such as what does he or she like or what is he or she doing now. A blogroll is a list of readings, movies or music, which author find interesting and want to share them with others. Many bloggers want to recommend their favourite movies to others. Blogroll refers to additional articles and weblogs sides which an author finds worthy to visit and read too. All are linked, so after a click, you are redirected to the desired document. A statistic table might be placed on the sidebar, which shows how many people have visited this webpage, how many posts, comments, categories are at the page or what is the name of the last comment. Some bloggers, in acknowledgement of their readership, placed a list of comments on the sidebar as well. As an additional feedback to comments, some authors use opinion polls situated usually on the top or in the middle of the sidebar. These functions depend on the limits of the service (Blogger.com or Blog.sme.sk).

There are more special features about blog's sidebars- RSS. RSS is a content format that alters how audience members interact with a blog. RSS stands for "Really Simple Syndication." In Lenhart's thesis, it is explained as the content format which, when used with an RSS aggregator or reader, updates users whenever anything on a specific Web page is updated. Commonly used on weblogs, news Web sites and other places with frequently freshened content, RSS "feeds" allow the user to collect feeds from sites that interest them in one place, than have the aggregator or reader check the feed link at predetermined intervals for new content (Lenhart, 2005, p.19). RSS is usually indicated with an orange small icon, so it's enough visible for readers. RSS often connotes "Syndicate this site," or "Atom". RSS feeds are collected by the user in an RSS aggregator, either a desktop or Web-based utility that shows the reader all recently updated links. Some examples of aggregators include Bloglines, Feedreader, NetNewsWire, (for Mac) and Newsgator, among many others (Lenhart, 2005). RSS changes the way how the leader communicate with author. RSS aggregator cuts the comments for example, so audience can't interact with a weblog's site anymore.

2.2   Who are Bloggers?

Journal ABC News called bloggers "The people of the year" (Vargas, 2004). But who are actually these people? Bloggers have been admired and dismissed at the same time. Journalists and reporters hate them, because they have taken the role of the muckrakers.

Jonathan Stein, a big critic of bloggers, called them "guys in pyjamas". He rates them as an illiterate and uncultured people, who just sit at home, behind a computer all days and all they can do, is to criticise others. Hewitt, a famous blogger, wrote on his defence "This attempt to sow the impression that bloggers were semi-obsessed losers ranting away and venting their frustration to other losers in a self-contained circle of fanaticism" (Hewitt, 2005, p.111). Bloggers and journalists may have conflicts but this might have nothing to do with the Internet users. According to a study, 62% of the Internet users don't even know what a blog is (Flynn, 2006, p.3).

Anyway, blogging has become wildly popular among enthusiasts at home and at the office. It is a brand new 'sickness' among bloggers called 'Blogorrhea'. Blogorrhea is supposed to be a condition that can be cured only by more of the disease and the imposition of a kind of external discipline on a writer that depends on the growth of actual readers. A Blogorrhea, as Glen Fleishemen explains, is "A tendency for creativity- strapped bloggers to write meaningless prose in an attempt to keep their blog active" (Rodzvilla et. al, 2002). One of the evidence that blogging and Blogorrhea have already entered the culture in a significant and lasting way is the fact, that Slovakia has already the awarded competition for the best blog.

The prestigious Slovakia Awards for Journalism offers for bloggers to take part in the famous competition. This year it will be already the third time when bloggers are priced for their blogs' writings. Three years ago nobody expected that a blog category would be added to Slovakia Awards for Journalism. In 2006, Gabina Weissová won the first price in the Blog category. Gabina started to write her blog in 2006 and filled it with her sad experience about bulimia and anorexia. In 2007, there were already 76 contributions singed up for the Blog category in the Slovakia Awards for Journalism. Authors may apply to the competition on their own. It seems to be more common that editors, audiences, readers and fans register their favourite blogger. There are eight juries who consider on blogs. Later, they announced the results of the competition. The Slovakia Awards for Journalism 2007 was organised by Open Society Foundation in cooperation with principal partner Philip Morris Slovakia, Association of Periodic Press Publishers, the World Bank, Memo 98 and Prime agency time (Open Society Foundation, 2008).

2.2.1 Bloggers' Audience

Blogging is a solitary activity. One is alone, sitting behind a computer, thinking and typing. Blogging is not a chat, thus it is not an open conversation between blogger and blogger's audience. However, according to a study carried by Nardi, blogging belongs much more to the social activities as one's would think (Nardi, 2004, p.42). Blog writing is a social behaviour that enables mutual conversation with others based on posted articles. Blog authors have frequent opportunities to receive feedback from readers through standard blog functions such as comments (Miura, 2007). Bloggers' relationship with their audiences seems to be one of the highest points of blogging. Nardi et al. have characterized blogs as a "Studied minuet between blogger and audience" and have distinguished two kinds of audiences:

- The bloggers's own, known social network

- Larger audience beyond the author's friends and family

Nardi et al. studied why writers blog and the reasons that push writers to blog and listed these reasons as an association with the existence of an audience. Among these reasons:

- Building chronicles of everyday events that serve to update others on bloggers' lives

- Expressing opinions to influence others

- Seeking others' opinions and feedback

- Thinking by writing: The study points out that, "while thinking might seem a solitary activity, or one not quite social, in blogging the presence of the audience and the writer's consciousness of the audience clearly introduce the social into an individual's thought process"

- Releasing of emotional tension: Even in an activity like this, where the purpose of blogging seems private, the same attention to audience was present. It is emotional tension with an audience that was found to be especially powerful for bloggers.

Nardi et al. also found that even bloggers were delighted with their audiences, there was a clear desire to keep the audience under control " Interactivity was valued, but only in controlled small doses" (Nardi, 2004, p.42-44).

A related article, reporting on the same study, has characterized blogs as "protected space" (Viegas, 2004). Gumbrecht claims here that because readers' comments are subservient to the blogger's posts, blogs create a protected arena in which authors feel safe to express emotions and experiences. The study also states that authors use ambiguous language and references in order to protect themselves and select their audience. When posts are ambiguous enough, only those readers who know what is happening in the blogger's life are able to understand the meaning of what has been published (Viegas, 2004). Moreover, some weblog's services are giving to the authors more control for creating the lists of friends. Blog filters can also be used to ensure a better privacy for the blogger.

2.3 The Blogosphere as a Network

The blogosphere is a classic social network with special features that makes it unique. "The blogosphere is about trust" wrote Hugh Hewitt, one of the top bloggers in the world (Hewitt, 2005, p.12). Mark Tremayne mentioned in his book three special features of the blogosphere:

First, the communication carried on this network appears primarily in text form and, in most cases, is archived (Tremayne, 2007, xi). Most social networks are characterised by verbal communication which is unrecorded, in contrast to the blogosphere where it is possible to reconstruct accurately the flow of ideas in the network. A persistence of written records have pros and cons. Advantages are that you can always get back and read it again, or use it for you purpose, the blog entries could be available online for a long time. On the other side, an entry may get author into trouble for something he or she had posted on the blog. There was recently a case in Slovakia of a young homosexual blogger, who uncovered his identity on his blog. Jack responded by doing something other teens used to do for years- he poured his emotions into a personal journal. However, this journal was a blog on his website that was accessible to his friends and anyone else who might stumble upon it while surfing the Web. He opens his chest to every one and that harmed his parents, relatives, friends, teachers and everybody who knows him. He said for the media" My blog

brought me a lot of troubles: despised looks of others on the streets, vilification and lost of view of my close friends. Frankly said, to be a gay in Slovakia and to confess it on the public it's still not the right thing" (Dyda, 2008).

Second, the social ties of this network are explicitly designated when a blogger provides a link to another blog. These links come in two forms. There is the blogroll[6]. These set of links are relatively static and typically appears as a part of the main page navigation. A second category of links is more dynamic (Tremayne, 2007, xii). It happens when bloggers links to other blogs within their posts. It is a hidden rule between bloggers: if you link to someone, he or she has to link you back. It might be inferred that these links and the blogs connected by them comprise the blogosphere.

A third special quality, according to Mark Tremayne, is the speed with which it is evolving. All networks evolve, but some change so slowly that questions regarding network dynamics can be difficult to examine (Tremayne, 2007, xiii). Blogs may be updated with up-to-minute information and contents may change faster than in mainstream media.

There exist many sites in where you can create your own blog and you don't need to know HTML language. Since Blogger.com was invented, everyone can create a blog in just few steps and all for free. "Building a Web log is pretty trivial, assuming you don't want to run your own server" says Greg Tyrelle, a postdoctorial fellow at National Yang-Ming University in Taiwan and the creator of Nodalpoint, a one of the most visited blogs about science (Secko, 2005, p.38). There are few steps in creating a weblog on public domain. I introduce Blogger.com as a "worldwide" example:

> 1. Pick a theme to discuss and choose a name. Whether your writing will be about your life or literature you've read, or cars, it is important to select something what you are interested in. One of the top blogger said "For me, blogging is about passion. It's about finding something you want to share with other people, and maybe just getting more familiar with yourself" (Frank Warren in Banks, 2008, p. 68).

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[6] I explained above

2.   Look for a service to host your blog. As I mentioned above, several free services already exist such as Blogger.com, LiveJournal.com, or in Slovakia we have Blog.pravda.sk, Blog.sme.sk and more.

3.   Start with writing. Often filter bloggers get comfortable writing by first referencing other blogs they read and then commenting on them. Journal bloggers open their mind and write. "Having an online diary available means for them (bloggers) to translate daily experiences into words" says Tamara Zemlo, a blogger (Secko, 2005, p.38).

4.   Link to other blogs, Secko recommends. Once you're comfortable, start linking to other blogs so that people will notice you through services as those at Technorati.com. Also make sure your RSS feed is enabled, so people will know when you update your blog. "Web logs don't happen without RSS" says Greg Tyrelle (Secko, 2005, p.39).

2.4   Blogs in Slovakia

The number of Internet users in Slovakia is constantly rising. A survey made by Mediaresearch shows that in 2007 there were 96 310 new Internet users[7] (Mediaresearch, 2007). Slovakia has 5 447 502 citizens, thus to gain almost 100 000 new users in one year might be considered as a success (CIA, 2007). Unfortunately, in Slovakia, there is no survey about blogs and bloggers yet. As an example from Europe I may mention a survey from Germany, where 10% of Internet users are interested in blogs (Bleskovky.sk, 2007).

2.4.1   Media and Blogs

Every time in humans' history when a new media showed up, we have confronted the possibility if the new media will influence the traditional media. In this case, if blogging will engender massive change in our society, most especially in the role and power of the traditional mainstream media. Some authors already asked a question" Will blogging mean the death of Big Media" (Kline&Burstein, 2005, p.240)? However, quite a few bloggers

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[7] Available in the Table of Tables

have predicted that outcome. More alarming is the fact, that still more and more young people are inclining to computer and newspaper reading has dropped dramatically. The most recognisable feature which made blogs so unique is, that blogs help break down the anonymity and isolation of modern life. Kline wrote that blogs give people a voice and empowered them to change something. In other words, blogging's ultimate product is empowerment what comparing to mainstream media, is big step forward to audience. According to Calacanis, a Web producer, a weblog "Creates a fluid and living form of self-expression like an avatar in cyberspace that we wear like a skin. Through it we articulate ourselves" (Kline&Burstein, 2005, p.160).

Media in Slovakia have been trying to attract audience on new services – the blogs (CTK, 2007). Almost all prominent press media in Slovakia offer on their webpages an opportunity to create blogs through which readers can share their ideas. Media representatives agree that through blogs they want to offer to readers the opportunity to express their opinions or publish comments on actual events. In addition, thanks to the new media phenomenon- blogs, the rates of media are rising rapidly (ČTK, 2007).

The first pathfinder in blogging among media was the daily newspaper Sme. Pravda, another daily newspaper, created the blog service for its audience after Sme. Trend, the weekly magazine about economy, came after Sme and Pravda. Blogging started to be very popular, so Hospodárske noviny announced the possibility to open a blog too. Slovak tabloids, in spite of the highest number of readers, haven't put blog service yet. "The goal was to offer to readers a bit different point of view on the world. Simultaneously, we wanted to gain new topics from blogs for Sme, which don't usually occur in newspapers. For example: the personal insights, reflections, experience with different companies or institutions. We wanted to collect more information from regions or other countries, where SME don't have journalists, but where Slovaks live" said the Head of Sme.sk, Tomáš Bella (ČTK, 2007).

Nowadays, the blog community at Blog.sme.sk consists mainly of bloggers, who publish various postings which cover a wide range of topics from family through society to politics and information technologies. Daily newspaper Sme launched a blog portal in 2004. Just editors and journalists was blogging throughout the few first months. Today, there is more than 8500 registered bloggers on Blog.sme.sk. Moreover, 10% of all are active writers (Dyda, 2008). Blogs on Blog.sme.sk are different, because readers have the opportunity to evaluate each author not just by comments. Sme.sk invented "Karma", what is the hon-

our of quality. The reader can give a point to the blogger, if he or she likes the quality of an article. From 2007 authors have the opportunity to place a video on the weblogs too. Slovakia Awards for Journalism proved in 2006 that Blog.sme.sk has become the most successful blog service in Slovakia, because all finalists in the Blog cathegory were Sme bloggers.

Pravda offers on its Web pages blogs as well. It merged with Blog.sk and together they operate blogs on Blog.pravda.sk. Pravda has got almost 3000 bloggers, however not all are active in posting.

Everyone can contribute to Blog.sme.sk and Blog.pravda.sk hovewer one has to fulfil the criteria first. The criteria include, that you have to publish your name and photograph, for example (Dyda, 2008). Pravda doesn't demand the name and blogger can write under a pseudonym. In addition, both newspapers have the right to publish the most interesting articles from bloggers in press newspapers.

The weekly Trend has a different approach to blogs and blogging. It launched blogs in the end of 2006 and bloggers are mainly journalists, economists and financial managers. Thus not everyone can join the weblog community at Trend websites. Trend chooses its bloggers itself.

Hospodárske noviny is a newspaper which provides mostly information about economic problems. It launched blog portal in 2007. You can create a blog on Hnblog.sk. "Our vision is that blogs at Hnblog.sk might be formed mainly by bloggers who are known: celebrities with economic background, politicians and important people from culture. Our journalists, editors, chief editor and director can contribute with their postings on Hnblog.sk too" stated Chief of the editor representative of Hospodarske noviny, Juraj Danielis (ČTK, 2007).

Blogs can be created by editors and journalists from other media as well. They just have to follow different rules than mediocrity people. Sme, for example, suggests to its editors to post into blogs just "what is not mentioned in newspapers" (ČTK, 2007). Editors and journalists can publish their personal opinions on the Web. On the other side, they have to be entirely unbiased in press newspapers.

More strict policy is in force for Trend's editors and journalists. "Reporters and journalists who work for press newspapers are controlled more than employees contributing

just on the Web. A reader sees beyond the writer's article his employer, because editor writes under employer's name. Therefore, publishing can't be free", told Chief of the editors eTrend, Jaroslav Matyáš (ČTK, 2007).

2.4.2   Situation in the Blogosphere

A blogger is a person who posts on the Internet a cluster of information and updates it frequently. The blogger needs to have a computer with Internet access and ability to write a coherent text. In addition, it is important to have persistence in writing too. Dyda claims that the expiration time of ordinary blogger's posting is estimated from two to three years (Dyda, 2008). Some authors finish with their writing after two articles. There are many reasons, why writers don't develop their blogs anymore. They can't find what to write more about. Or they might get disappointed from readers' critics. A lot of things might discourage a blogger to continue in blogging. Dyda describes the problem "In the beginning it may seem that everything goes easy. However, if one is not a professional writer or is not used on everyday routine of writing, the end comes very soon" (Dyda, 2008). Especially the blogger might be disappointed if he finds that somebody else already posts about the same problem. For example, one blogger from Liptovský Mikuláš posted news about Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Then he found out, that another blogger posts about SEO too. This fact disappointed him so much that he decided to end with blogging.

Everyone has now the same chance to write, but the question is, if everyone has what to add. One Slovak writer, Milan Kundela, once said "It will come a day when everyone will wake up as a writer, and times of general misunderstanding and deafness will begin. Everyone will write, but there will be no one who will read it" (Dyda, 2008). Last years it has become popular to publish a book among Slovak bloggers, which contains comments from their blogs. For example, a successful blogger who pride himself on a book is Peter Moskala and his "Cestopis" (Book of travels). The book "Cestopis" contains two tales which were originally published on Moskala's blog at Blog.sme.sk.

Bloggers are usually mediocrity citizens who like to share their ideas with others. But what about celebrities and famous people? Do they blog? Not so many celebrities blog

in Slovakia. It's one of the common features of blogging in the World too, that not many famous persons want to be active and attract audiences through blogs. You can find blog of president of Iran[8], even Fidel Castro has one. But they look more as a duty than as the blogs about real lives. With Slovak celebrities it is quite the same. It is enough to visit a webpage Blog.aktualne.sk where you can find tens of blogs belonging to celebrities. However, there is no regular postings, no actual articles. Milan Lasica, a famous Slovak actor, summed this problem up very frankly in his blog" My dear friends, I have got an offer for cooperation. Till now, I had no idea what a blog is. Now I know that is a webpage, where I can express my opinions. So, I want to take advantage of it at once: currently I have no opinions, but it will change for sure, so keep in touch. Yours Sincerely, Milan Lasica" (Dyda, 2008).

For the politicians, blogs represent a significant tool of communication with their voters. The most active in blogging are politicians in pre-election period, of course. During this period, electoral crews cooperate closely with bloggers and mainstream media quote bloggers' opinions. Many famous politicians were blogging during the pre-election period in Slovakia too. Zuzana Martináková, Ľudovít Kaník, and congresswoman of European Parliament Anna Záborská, all used to blog. However, all these politicians finished with their postings in the same moment when electoral results were announced[9]. Civil unions' and labour unions' activists blog much more compared to the politicians.

Some editors claim that bloggers destroy grammar language. The fact that everyone can become a blogger, even the person without higher education, may implicate that blogs are full of grammar and spelling mistakes. It is proven already, that increasing number of bloggers leads to decline of text quality (Dyda, 2008). Many of the bloggers have problems to formulate in sentence what they want to talk about.

Another interesting feature of the Slovak blogosphere is flexibility of bloggers. Many found out very fast, that eye-catching headlines and topics might bring audience. Thus some bloggers use sensationalist headlines to reach high attendance of readers, but text is actually low quality without any idea. Blogger can easy capture reader's attention by a title as "My

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[8] www.ahmadinejad.ir

[9] I am talking about election in 2006

first visit in sexshop" or "5 steps how to become a good lover". An astounding fact is that bloggers who ignore grammar are more popular. Words as "ty si kúl" (you are cool) or "to je freš" (it's fresh) are in. The worst might be when blogger plays with readers' feelings. To blog about imagined dying relatives or forgotten love make you become a blogostar. Pictures of flowers or bugs might be very impressive for the readers too. Blogs which have interesting text and carry a meaningful idea are not many.

2.5   Why do People Blog?

There are many ways to communicate online. So why is the blogging phenomenon so popular? Why have the blogs succeeded so well and so quickly? Barlow is giving an answer in his book about blogosphere. He thinks that by the twentieth century, people have altered the nature of public debate by domesticating it. He said that discussion seems to be carefully cultivated and that there seems to be no barrier to its proliferation. But anyway it has changed in a specific way, that it assumes the form of a consumer item. "People want to talk and they want their expression to be unfettered ", Barlow claims (Barlow, 2007, p.177). He sees the problem in commercial media, which have slowly and quietly tried to take that ability away. "Mainstream media are leaving most of the population as nothing more than passive consumers, observers of the conversations of others "(Barlow, 2007, p.178). This has lead to frustration and feeling of powerlessness that had no outlet, until the appearance of blogs. Barlow wrote that the world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only. Thus people aware that something was wrong with the public sphere presented to them by the mainstream media simply began to turn away from public involvement as a whole (Barlow, 2007, p.179).

Michael A. Banks thinks that blogs are so popular, because blogging is dynamic and flexible. And in its core blogging is a communication tool that encompasses all communication models: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many (Banks, 2008, xx). The blog is also a means of establishing and maintaining a presence in cyberspace. Michael A. Banks wrote in his book" Online activities are often counterparts of real, psychical world events, activities, or situations. In trying to come up with a counterpart to blogging to help define it, I talked with several acquaintances about it. We came up with variety of possibilities: preachers on street corners, political discussions in cafes, rock concerts, riots, trade shows, and so on. We finally decided that trade shows were just about the best analogy for

blogging, because trade shows are about maintaining a presence as well as dialogues on specific subjects" (Banks, 2008, Introduction).

Blogging gives voice to millions and enable individuals to spread their presence across the world. One blogger posted reasons why she blogs:

Why do I blog? For the same reason I write poetry, learn the Irish language, and make mail art to send out to strangers: because, while none of these activities makes me more functional in the "real world", there is no reason good enough not to.

I blog because I've met some fantastically weird and interesting people over the internet and through my four years of blogging, including my husband and some of my closest friends. I'm also an American expat in Ireland and it can get lonely in the Land of No Yanks. I blog because nobody listens to me when I speak gibberish in the flesh, but bloggers actually like it, or at least that's what they say. I blog because I'm intensely paranoid, scared, angry and on the brink of breaking down nervously, and if I do that here I make less of a gooey mess.

I blog because for as long as I can remember words have been my medium, my escape, and sometimes my downfall. "Girl, your mouth is going to get you in trouble someday" – said my mother and she was right. I've lost a job due to blogging and have had to face some seriously pissed off friends and relatives, and still I keep coming back for more. That's because I'm a self-centered uncaring cow. But I'm also thoughtful and kind, somehow.

I blog because blogging has helped me realize how much of an absurdist weirdo I am. (Sandhill Trek, 2004)

The blogger express her feelings very straightforwardly, what is one of the main characteristics why actually people do blogging. People who are "infected by the Blogorrhea" from blogging appreciate this forthcoming and free conversation very much. In the blogosphere there are no boundaries and no censorship which would stop your thoughts' flow.

On the other side, the blogger mentioned in the text problems connecting with the matter of blogging too. It's a serious thing to lost a job due blogging. There is a case about woman named Dooce, who lost her job by the sake of blogging about her boss. The story has become so famous among bloggers, that 'dooced' means 'fired' in the bloggers' dialect now.

Blog differs from traditional media in many ways. For example, blogosphere is not divided into audience and media, as traditional media are classified. In the blogosphere there is just audience which writes for audience. Ordinary people became writers, story-tellers and journalists. One of the first blogger in the world, Glen Reynolds, has worldwide known blog Instapundit and receives over one hundred thousand visitors per day. He said in one interview, that he used to get angry e-mails from mainstream media folks, who don't like what he said about them. Thus that indicates that MSM thinks that weblogs matter (Stone, 2004, p.43). It is a well know story from 2003 about Jayson Blair, a New York Times reporter, who had to resign because bloggers found out that his articles were plagiarism. Hugh Hewitt, a top blogger, noticed "A senior journalist for the Los Angeles Times told me that he writes with the fear that he will be blogged, meaning exposed as careless or agenda-driven, thus mocked and shamed and perhaps fired. That fear is a good thing for journalists to carry with them and it should also be on the minds of every public figure and corporate leader" (Hewitt, 2005, p.15). Blogs seem to be mainstream media watchdogs, because of their un-biased character. One blogger wrote" Blogging technology makes anyone with specialized knowledge an effective muckraker" (Hewitt, 2005, p.38). Blogging encourages people to open their minds and feel free.

Slovak bloggers do not play the role of media muckrakers so visibly yet. Most of the blogs in Slovakia are filled with personal thoughts or they are about IT technologies. Very few blogs are written by people who criticise media. It's probably still a tradition that media has the power to criticise, not the people.

Blogs provide a space for words which would be never said before. A woman from Egypt can post now on the Web information which she wouldn't be able to mention at her home country. On the Web she can express her feelings about women's situation in Egypt. Instead of critique she meets hundred other bloggers who stand for her (Weyman, 2007). These types of blogs are giving an unparalleled view into the social lives the region's globally-minded people. George Weyman thinks that personal blogs, which are run by individuals for a close-knit group of friends and peer bloggers, are growing in their numbers. These blogs belong to one's individual and direct experience or thoughts. People may have problems they have to face. Blogs are interesting for it's repercussions for how the people who use them think of themselves (Weyman, 2007).

It really doesn't matter if someone's blog is focused on a hobby, work, politics, or just what he or she does during the course of the day. Blogging is information sharing, and the more he or she researches and shares, the more will gain expertise in the area of hers or his interest, even if that idea is only about "things that interest me". Every post which is published is added to one's life's work, and that work is a window on one's mind. Some blogs were so popular among readers that they have become books already. "Witness The Long Tail" and "Naked Conversations" or newest book from the soldier Colby Buzzel "My War: Killing time in Iraq". Political bloggers or warbloggers think of their blog as a personal news channel. In Slovakia I would like to mention a successful author Anna Adamova, a blogger, who published last year her postings about love in a book called "Na Lasku sa nezomiera" (One doesn't die from love).

Previous writings examined some reasons why people are attracted to blogging. In his survey, Nardi has discovered five major motivations for blogging. They are: documenting one's life; providing commentary and opinions; articulating ideas through writing; and forming and maintaining community forums (Nardi, 2004, p.43).

In blogs about 'document one's life' many informants blogged to record activities and events. Throughout observation the Slovakian blogosphere I found out, that mainly women are authors who post information and experience from life. Blogging is an important way to communicate especially when people's lives are compromised in some way, when they get sick or they are going through difficult time period. For example, a Slovak girl Gabina Weissova became popular for her postings about her own experience of bulimia and anorexia. Keeping family and friends abreast of life events is a reason for blogging. There are blogs which authors are young students who want to stay in touch with family and friends and through blogs they express their feelings from abroad, travelling and so on. It seems easier to publish a blog than to send a mass e-mail. In addition, blog emphasized the broadcast nature of blogging: information is posted and no one need respond, unless they wish to. "Blogs are not intrusive. No one is forced to pay attention. Reading is voluntary, when convenient", wrote Nardi (Nardi, 2004, p.43).

In Sme newspapers there was an article about the oldest blogger in Slovakia. Karol Okal is an eighty-three years old chronicler, who writes about his life and about stories he has heard from people. His process of posting might seem quite difficult. First he writes text with pencil and then types his stories on a typewriter. He sends his postings in an envelope

which has to travel through half republic to his granddaughter's husband. Granddaughter's husband rewrites Okal's postings into electronic form. After that he puts it on Karol Okal's weblog, which he created. Karol Okal said" I write for people. I write for free, but not in vain" (Kubaljaková, 2008).

Blogs as a commentary encourage authors to find their voices to expressing their opinions. Writers portrayed their postings as a breakthrough form of democratic self-expression. It can be often a critique. One technology consultant in Slovakia was knowledgeable about information technology and politics in developing countries. He started blogging to comment on a conference he attended, afterwards his blog turned to be about technologies. Many bloggers comment here on events in politics, law and so one. Others criticise movies or music. Other blogger said" I guess I am an amateur rock and cultural critic. I also comment on things that I'd be embarrassed to email to others" (Nardi, 2004, p.44).

Many authors have blogs as their catharsis. Blogs help them to get rid of dirty thoughts an even anger. Blogs might be served as an outlet valve for one's thoughts and feelings. The content is sometimes patently emotional (Nardi, 2004, p.44). Many bloggers on the Web post feelings and emotions "from their own world". Blogs give the people the place where to express, where to "shout". Blogs are the "valves" which help people to open their chests and get their feelings out there.

Blogs are the "outlet valves", but blogs might be a muse for someone too. People like blogging because for them it is "thinking by writing" (Nardi, 2004, p.44). Bloggers train their minds and learn by searching for new information too. A blog forces blogger to keep writing and keep thinking about events around, in addition they may reach an audience which shapes their writing too. Many bloggers who started posting are now writing articles for big magazines and are having regular readers. A blogger from Slovakia got an offer to work as an editor after her blog postings were published in press newspapers.

Blog, as a community forum, gathers usually a group of bloggers who likes to write about common things. They might know each other. There are class blogs, company's blogs, poet blogs, political blogs and many more. A professor at Mathematical and Physical Faculty in Bratislava published a class blog, where he posts for his students challenging exercises. Students find it very interesting to get some practise in uncommon exercises for

which is no time at school. Students can train theirs abilities and do not have to sit at school too. In addition, a class blog provides a sense of community. It is very exciting to find out whether Slovakia has a blog community. Tori Mortensen expresses her opinion about blogs in Scandinavia. She called them "our weblogs" or "the Scandinavian flavoured cluster". She describes the blog community which has grown through gradual linking. It has also developed through personal and professional contacts. " Many of us knew each other from conferences before starting to write weblogs" (Mortensen&Walker, 2002, p.271).

For teachers, scholars, students or professors blogs represent a possibility to save theirs thoughts. Toril Mortensen talked about blogs they elucidate the constant flow of thought and the ever-changing nature of research too. She thinks that most ideas the researcher has never make it to a formal article or book (Mortensen&Walker, 2002, p.267). Thus blogs represent a place for storage her ideas. A few students from Multimedia Communication Faculty in Bratislava published blog where they post materials for studies, video commercials and events- all about advertising to save it for next generation of students. To put it in a nutshell, blog is written by people and for people that's what it makes so unique and irreplaceable.

3   CONCLUSION TO THE FIRST PART

Slovakia is one of the countries of Central and Eastern European that has been suffering for long from the communist legacy of media subordination to the government. Mainstream media, as radio and television, have been facing to complex process of democratization. Today, Slovak public and private media are still encountering obstacles that hinder them from accomplishing their mission of informing and raising the consciousness of their public.

Slovaks have still fresh memories from communism period, when the communist party dictated to the media what to broadcast about. The Revolution after 1989 brought a fundamental change in radio and television broadcast program. However, during the 1994-1998 period government lead by HZDS restrained again tightly Slovakian media scene. Slovak Television served for the interest of the government. The commercial television TV Markíza offered more democratic broadcast. However, TV Markíza was a tool of presenting politicians interests too. Radio was more open to broadcast unbiased news than televisions. That's one of the reasons why Slovak Radio has been the most trustworthy media institution in last fifteen years in Slovakia (Minárik, 2000, p.27). Internet position is more complex, because Slovakia has had no law or restriction to guide people who publish on the Web yet.

Situation in the Slovak media scene is now, according to some politicians, very democratic. Current government with Róbert Fico, a prime minister, used to complain about too wild journalists who don't respect any rules and don't have respect for nothing. Journalists write about too sensitive and private matters, according to prime minister. Last week government resolved new Press law what brought the wave of critic from journalists and media folks not just from Slovakia[10]. SITA states that the new law restricts journalists who can't publish now anything or they might get high penalties. Injured person has the right to publish an article for her or his defence according to the new law (Augustín and Agentúra SITA, 2008). Slovak citizens and media organisations don't like the new law and they think that it restricts and harms the freedom of expression and democracy in Slovakia.

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[10] http://www.sme.sk/c/3830359/Ceski-sefredaktori-pisu-prezidentovi.html

People in Slovakia incline still more and more to blog. Blogs are frequently updated web pages containing records which are chronologically arranged and saved. They has allowed to Slovaks to discuss topics openly in never-ending conversations. Blogs represent a new media phenomenon which demolished all boundaries and opened a space for freedom of expression and for democracy.

In my research paper I will try to uncover and find out the reasons why Slovaks have become so avid bloggers and what has inspired them to create a blog and start with postings. My research question is:

RQ: Why do people blog in Slovakia?

Slovaks might find blogging as a tool of strengthening democracy which brings them freedom of expression. They might feel the sense of community what gives them the impression of solidarity. In addition, blogs open the space for discussion, thus people exchange the new and specific information. Therefore, my work's hyphotesis is:

H: I think that Slovaks blog because they want to exchange new information.

Blogging could be fun or relax for Slovaks. Blogging may become an addiction for someone or it may be a kind of escape from reality. Psychologists think that blogs represents a kind of catharsis for human's soul.

II. PRACTICAL PART

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 Previous studies

Today, blogs are becoming more and more popular in all around the World. Since blogs have had their period of glory, many researchers have been interested in exploring this new media phenomenon. Numerous scientists have already focused on the characteristics of the blogs. Viegas, for example, distinguished three types of blogs which are personal journals, filters and knowledge blogs (Viegas, 2005).

Nardi explored in his study five major motivations for blogging: documenting one's life; providing documentary and opinions; articulating ideas through writing; forming and maintaining community forums. He also uncovered the reasons that push authors to write. They are: build chronicles of everyday events; expressing opinions to influence others; seeking others' opinions and feedback; thinking by writing and releasing of emotional tension (Nardi, 2004).

Banks wrote in his study that blogging is dynamic and flexible. In addition, blogging is a communication tool that encompasses all communication models: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many (Banks, 2008).

Many researchers have studied relationship between bloggers and their audiences. Nardi et al. have discovered two kinds of audiences: the bloggers' own, known social network; and a larger audience beyond the author's friends and family (Nardi, 2004).

Miura uncovered mechanisms that support authors' intentions to persist in writing their blogs (Miura, 2007). Through frequent updating the contents of the blogs become richer and more meaningful. Therefore, according to the Miura study, most blog authors start blogging with the intention of continuing to write as long as possible. The time how long bloggers are keeping their postings depends on audiences' feedback. Audiences have the possibility to leave the feedback in authors' weblogs. Through comments they can discuss topics with bloggers. Therefore, comments have become an attractive tool for numerous surveys.

Miura claims that positive feedback from readers has a positive effect on all kinds of satisfaction. For example, sympathy, support and encouragement work as a strong emo-

tional social support on the behaviour of publishing a blog and motivate a person to continue to be an author. On the other side, the negative feedback as criticism or complaints, don't have any significant effect on bloggers' satisfaction. Miura characterized online diary writing as a kind of self-disclosing behaviour. Miura came out from previous surveys and he distinguished three types of benefits bloggers have from posting.

- Benefit to self. A blog is mainly based on personal experience of the author. This is the most popular topic among blogs authors too. Writing about personal problems may help to understand ourselves more deeply and mitigate major problems or conflicts. The more bloggers benefit this way, the more they should feel satisfaction with blog writing.

- Benefit to relationship with others. This kind of blog has a communication function. Authors identify themselves as having a social existence. The more they activate communication with their audiences, the more they feel satisfied.

- Benefit to information handling skills. Authors want to improve their information handling skills. Bloggers benefit from transmitting information, leaving comments on other's blogs and obtaining new information from others (Miura, 2007).

Blogospehere is perceived as a social network, where communication is verbal and it's archived (Tremayne, 2007). A special feature of the blogosphere is its links or blogrolls which make the connection between bloggers. Through blogrolls bloggers might preserve weblinks they find interesting or they store there friends whi they like to be in touch. Bloggers link to each other, actually linking is the cornerstone of blogging. Through linking bloggers seek for new information and share their opinions. Tremayne sees another special characteristic of the blogosphere which is the speed. Authors can change a content of the blog in a minute, what makes blogs different form the traditional mainstream media (Tremayne, 2007). Blogs are unique for their up-to-minute information which might be the essence of the new media's power. Blogger might post and distribute the information few minutes after an event happened. However, the traditional mainstream media need time for processing and production.

4.2 My study

In my study I aim at researching Slovak bloggers and Slovak blogosphere. Through an ethnographical study and a questionnaire I try to gain new knowledge and information which will contribute to answering my research question and validating my work's hypothesis.

First, I will try to obtain more detailes about the Slovak bloggers. What characteristics he or she has. Where does the blogger live or how old is the Slovak blogger in average. Through ethnographical observation and the questionnaire I will attempt to explore more about the demographical features of bloggers in Slovakia.

I will try to find out more information about blogs. I am curious if bloggers use journals or if they keep the knowledge blogs[11]. I explore what people like to blog about and what the main topics they discuss are. I want to bring more light into the research about blogs among Slovak bloggers in general.

Blogging as an activity consist not just from writing of the blog. However, blogging is about linking to other's blogs and expressing one's opinion. I am curious in my research about how often Slovaks blog and whether they hide their identity on the Web. From previous studies I foud out that there are bloggers who post under the pseudonyms to cover their identities from public. The main output from the questionnaire is to answer the research question "Why do people blog in Slovakia"? Here I attempt to find out what are the main motives to blog and what feelings does writing bring to the bloggers. According to Miura, authors have to find a satisfaction in writing. As long as they would acquire benefits from blogging they will continue writing too (Miura, 2007).

From previous studies, audience seems to be very a important driving power for the blogger to keep in writing. I attempt to discover what the reader means to the blogger in Slovakia. I would like to know if bloggers perceive the reactions from audiences and what kind of reactions they usually get.

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[11] According to Nardi's types of blogs- journals

Bloggers express their opinions and to leave comments on other's blogs. According to previous studies, bloggers keep blogging because they like to discuss with others and to share ideas and information. I try to explore if comments are important part of blogging for Slovaks. I attempt to know how they react to these comments and how they respond to them.

Someone might claim that blogosphere is a special clique and especially it might seem that in Slovakia there are not so many bloggers yet. I try to find out whether bloggers have their own community in Slovakia. I want to know if there is a bloggers' community in Slovakia and how the bloggers feel about it and what does this community offer them.

Currently many of bloggers in Slovakia are using Blog.sme.sk service to create the weblogs. They have to publish a whole name and a picture of themselves there. However, not so many are open to release their e-mail addresses or other contact information. Even much more difficult is to find more information about bloggers who are using Blog.pravda.sk service. Pravda offers to their authors to be anonymous, because there authors don't have to publish name, picture, contact or any of his or hers personal information. This made my observation more difficult.

In my study I attempt to find answers on to questions which might be unclear and interesting for researchers, students, journalists and public. Blogs are a new media phenomenon and I chose it for my research because there is very much to discover and observe. On the other side, I find very interesting to study so unique media which gives to people power to talk openly in front of the public. From my point of view, the last years have become crucial for Slovak bloggers and blogosphere. In Slovakia the "big bang" of blogs and bloggers has begun.

5 METHODS

This thesis seeks to answer a research question and to test a work's hypothesis. In addition, deeper observation of selected websites is required. Therefore, to explore and assess answers can't be summarized numerically. Thus, a qualitative method for collecting data is used.

To collect the data which can't be observed and results have to be gather numerically I use quantitative method. Therefore, this thesis combines qualitative with quantitative methods. According to Priest, the study may use quantitative data on content and on opinion and qualitative reconstruction of the sequence of events as demographical data, data concerned about time and so one (Priest, 1996, p.185).

In my survey I used two kinds of methods:

1.   Ethnographical observation

2.   Questionnaire

I searched for documents which were mainly studies made in the United States of America. I found an inspiration for my survey here. I came out from studies which fit into my intention. There was also theory I was looking for to strengthen my thesis. In Slovakia, there is no literature about blogs and blogosphere yet.

I used an ethnographical research design in my thesis. Data collection was based on procedures of online ethnography. That means to be on the persistent observation of selected sides of computer mediated discourse, based on the assumption that continuous monitoring affords insights into blogging practises and patterns of bloggers use this websites (Androutsopoulos, 2006). This thesis seeks to uncover primary the reason why people blog in Slovakia.

I used a questionnaire in form of a Web based survey to collect the data for this thesis. Survey is the term of a group of methods for structured data collection based on questions and answers (Olson, 2007). Data collection is gathered up in limited time on a random selected sample. It is necessary that the sample fulfils arranged criteria first. Questionnaire contains various types of questions.

5.1   Ethnographical research

Most traditional ethnographies are documents that attempt to explain, understand and reflect upon the culture or an aspect of the culture of a community in a particular geographic location. But the blogging community, if one can be said to exist, is non-geographic. Bloggers and readers do not interact in real space and often not in real time. This detachment from time and place means that instead of travelling to a particular place to immerse oneself in a culture in order to write about it, the ethnographer interested in understanding blogs must conduct her ethnographic work virtually (Lenhart, 2005, p.25).

This thesis uses the ethnographical observation which ran from January 2008 to March 2008. Throughout three months I was seeking for observing weblogs on the Web. Important touchstone was to find the weblogs which are possessed by owners with Slovak citizenship. I had noted down information I found. I tried to read blogs from every part of Slovakia, so I could find the nuances which might occur. I searched for bloggers from Blog.sme.sk, Blogger.com, Blog.pravda.sk, eTrend blogs, Hnblog.sk and private domains too.

To use Internet as a tool for the research brings many positives. Thanks to search engines, the data collection became easier for me. The Internet has turned to an increasing useful tool for citizens, thus for my research too.

In the first part I employed Slovak Web locators to search for information. As a tool for blogs' searching I used the biggest locators as Zoznam.sk and Atlas.sk. After I put a keyword "blog" and I moved step by step so I could open and read each blog carefully. On the Web locators I encountered on mainly private weblogs. It happened just occasionally that I foud there the blog from a public service.

For the second part I selected blogs which I decided to observe. Mostly I found websites about IT technologies like: computers, computers' programmes, hardware, software, PC accessories and many more. According to Viegas study, I can call them "knowledge" and "filters" blogs. A lot of blogs were about travelling, pets and about personal ex-

periences, feelings and thoughts too. Journals, as Viegas called these blogs, surprisingly[12], aren't so many among private weblogs' sites. Then I came across few blogs about sport activities as skiing, snowboarding or even horse riding. I classified this category of blogs as "filters".

Bloggers who own the private weblogs have good quality of graphics, what make them attractive at the first sight. Usually they update their blogs every week. These blogs differ very much from each other when it comes to the structure, colours, writing system and so one. Bloggers who are wise enough to use HTML language, tune their blogs with the newest applications.

Authors are mainly from young generation from 19 to 35 years. The youngest blogger I talked to was 13 years old boy and the oldest was 47 years old IT specialist. The unusual thing is that private weblogs are possessed by an overwhelming majority of men.

5.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is an efficient way of reaching a large number of respondents at relatively low cost. According to Bertrand, the questionnaire is appropriate for media research as: demographic surveys; rating surveys; attitude and opinion surveys; and surveys of behaviour (Bertrand&Hughes, 2005, p.69). In my questionnaire I tried to combine all types of mentioned surveys.

I found an inspiration for my questionnaire from a Master's thesis carried by an American student Amanda B. Lenhart (Lenhart, 2005). She took an ethnographic look at how bloggers and their audiences negotiate self-presentation, authenticity and norm formation in America. I was inspired by her work, thus I used her way of creating questions for my questionnaire.

In the survey I asked the bloggers about their age, gender, employment and location. For the study I inquired about how long the respondents have been possesing their blogs,

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[12] Viegas discovered that journals in the United States of America reached the overwhelming majority of blogs- 70,4%

how often they blog or how much time they spend with blogging. In the next part of my survey I explored the motivations and feelings which authors might experience throughout they are blogging. In the last part of the survey I asked why bloggers blog or if they read others' blog and why.

To collect the data I used questionnaire in form of a Web based survey. Compared to other studies I regard it as a best form how to receive answers on my research question and to test work's hypothesis too. I used the program Survey Monkey[13] to construct my survey. There are several advantages of using the Web based survey. It's quite cheap[14] and the respondents are able to choose the time and place to answer. Moreover, a researcher has huge range of opportunities how to create the survey as attractive as it is possible for the respondents. For instance, you can choose a colour, a style and a structure of your template. When you make your survey you can pick a type of font which you prefer. There is an unlimited amount of questions you can insert to the survey.

I sent out the questionnaire to a carefully selected sample by e-mail. Bertrand wrote that questionnaire allows a large sample over a widespread geographic area to be reached. It is relatively cheap method (Bertrand&Hughes, 2005, p.70). Questionnaire permits to reach respondents even they are not home. However, it needs time to wait for returned answers. Bertrand stated that questionnaires usually produce a low response rate, which can skew results (Bertrand&Hughes, 2005, p.70).

I divided the questionnaire into three parts[15]:

1. The consent

2. The body

3. The acknowledgement

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[13] www.surveymonkey.com

[14] It costs 13 EUR/month

[15] Please see the questionnaire in Appendix

In the first part, respondents agreed with terms and conditions of the questionnaire. I put in the consent that the names of all the bloggers who participated in this study are hidden to protect their privacy. Any images of blogs used in this paper are used with the express consent of the blogger. The body of the questionnaire contains an introduction where I inform the respondents about time they might spend with questions, and I asked them to answer it truthfully. There are 38 questions together. The last part is the acknowledgement which I found very important. I thank all bloggers for their time and endeavour to answer my questions. The questionnaire changed its form during the survey. I had to correct wrong set questions, for instance.

First time I sent out a link to selected sample of respondents on 28. February 2008. I mailed to first group of bloggers who were supposed to click on the link and filled out the questions. I picked the green colour for the questionnaire and an Arial font.

4. March 2008, when I mailed out to the second group of respondents, I changed the colour to apricot and olive green. I rewrote some questions which were unclear to some bloggers too. And I augmented the acknowledgement, because I had a feeling that I could be more thankful to the recipients.

17. March 2008, I changed the colour again to green and I deleted the acknowledgement at all. I had to do it because the respondents had problems to finish the questionnaire. I got e-mails from people who filled out all questions and when they came to the last page, the programme got jammed and all answers suddenly disappeared. In addition, I added the logo of the university to questionnaire, because I had a complaint that I missed a proof of reliability in my survey.

5.2.1 Developing research questions

In the questionnaire I produced two types of questions:

- Closed

- Open

I used the closed questions when I wanted to acquire limited possible responses. For example I asked "What gender are you?" And there were just two possible answers "Man" or "Woman"[16]. When sensitive information is being sought, closed questions are usually more acceptable for the respondents, and more likely to be honestly answered. Closed questions are generally easier to answer and the answers are simpler to process (Bertrand&Hughes, 2005, p.71). From closed questions I used:

- Limited choices. As: "Do you think about your readers when you write? " Answer: "Yes"/ "No".

- Multiple choices: "How often do you write on your blog?" Answer: "Daily"/ "Weekly"/ "Monthly".

- Attitudinal questions which provide a scale on which the respondent may indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. For example: "Why do you blog?" The respondents have to tick a number on the scale from 9-1, where 9 is "strongly agree" and 1 is "strongly disagree".

Open questions are those which allow the respondents to answer in their own words. According to Bertrand, they are most appropriate when the researcher cannot reasonably anticipate the range of likely answers (Bertrand&Hughes, 2005, p.72). I used open questions, because I sought more exact information. There are more types of open questions I used in the survey:

- Feeling questions: "What do you like the most on blogging?"

- Opinions questions: "Why do you think people read you blog?"

- Reasons why questions: "Why does it change?" (Blog)

- Follow-up questions: "Have your blog changed since you started with blogging?" "How does it change?" "Why does it change?"

Through these questions, I believe, I have found the answer to my research question and I tested my work's hypothesis. Since there hasn't been made any research about blogs

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[16] Please see the questionnaire in Appendix

in Slovakia yet, common to mine, I tried to cover all questions which might be interesting for the researchers.

5.2.2   Participants

I had chosen a sampling method before I collected the respondents. Sampling is a positivist term for selecting a smaller group to represent a larger group, allowing generalisation from the results, presented Bertrand (Bertrand&Hughes, 2005, p.64). During my research I had problems with volume of the sample, because questionnaires' recoverability wasn't as large as I had expected. Therefore, I had to divide the process of collecting respondents into three parts.

The first part lasted from 28. February 2008 till 4. March 2008. I searched for a sample of bloggers on servers as Zoznam.sk, Atlas.sk, Centrum.sk, Blog.sme.sk, Blog.pravda.sk, Blogy.etrend.sk and Blogger.com. I discovered tens of private weblogs thus in the first moment I thought that everything will go just well for me. The problem showed up when I noticed that all my respondents – bloggers are just men. So I started to search for the women at public services as Blogger.com and Blog.sme.sk. In the end I had 54 bloggers all together. From them there were 27 men and 27 women. From women's population: 5 possess private blogs, one used Blogger.com, and the rest were on Blog.sme.sk. From men's part the majority bloggers own private weblogs (16 men). Six have blog on the Blogger.com, 4 use Blog.sme.sk and just one man Blog.etrend.sk.

Participants from the first period were chosen randomly from all Slovakia. I tried to combine bloggers from big cities with bloggers from smaller towns, so I might avoid the problem that my respondents could have similar features. If all of them would be just from West part of the Slovak Republic for instance, it might bring similar answers to the questionnaire. I didn't take into consideration the age or other characteristics, because it was impossible to know about so personal information from blogs.

The second period occurred from 4. March 2008 to 17. March 2008. I utilised Web locators as Zoznam.sk, Atlas.sk, Centrum.sk, where I set the keyword "blog" and "Slovakia". After, I chose from thousands of possibilities just these pages, which fit to my survey. Then I searched through Blogger.com, Blog.sme.sk, Blog.etrend.sk and Blog.hnonline.sk. This time I created the sample with 22 new respondents. From them, 6 men and 3 women

have private blogs; one man and no woman have blogs on Blogger.com; on Blog.sme.sk possess blogs 2 men and 8 women; one man uses Blog.etrend.sk; and also one man has Blog.hnonline.sk. As the survey showed again, men possess private blogs and women own usually Blog.sme.sk.

The second sample was collected randomly and I put stress on demographic location again. Therefore, all 22 bloggers were picked from various parts of Slovakia. After second part of the procedure I sent out questionnaires to 76 bloggers and I expected that I will get enough answers for analysing the survey. Since I was wrong, I had to start the third (and the last) part to acquire the sample.

The third part lasted from 17. March 2008 to 4. April 2008. This time I collected almost all the required responses in two days. It was the fastest period I had. The bloggers filled out questionnaires within less than three days. I waited till 4. April, because there could be someone who would maybe reply later. In the last part I e-mailed 50 question-naires to new selected bloggers from Slovakia. I tried to collect the third sample of bloggers mainly from Blog.pravda.sk, because I wanted to be objective and cover all domains in Slo-vakia which offer to create weblogs. From 50 bloggers there were 25 women and 25 men: 22 men possess the private domains (weblogs), one uses Blogger.com, 2 Blog.sme.sk. I picked the overwhelming majority of women from Blog.pravda.sk (24). And one woman has a private domain.

I collected the last sample differently than in the two previous parts. I already knew that for men search I can use Zoznam.sk, Atlas.sk and Centrum.sk. The problem was that I met there the same people, thus I had to search longer and deeper to find the new respon-dents. It was also very difficult to recognise from which part of Slovakia bloggers are. I decided to pick up almost all women from Blog.pravda.sk. I got my women's sample from the "list of the bloggers" where I selected women who have the highest rate of readers[17] and who posted the last article in March 2008. I think the reason why this section was the fast-est one is because I selected bloggers who update their blogs in almost day-to-day fre-quency, thus they were able to respond to my questions almost immediately.

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[17] Available on http://blog.pravda.sk/blogs.html?o=v&l=.

5.3   Procedure

After I gathered the sample, I created a database of all participants. I archived each blogger's web link and the name of his or her blog. I was observing blogs which I chose, till I was sure that they are lively, active and frequently updated. Later on, I searched for e-mail addresses and I wrote an e-mail for the recipients. There were three types of e-mails' forms, because of three periods of my research. Three times I improved the content and corrected misunderstandings.

The first e-mail form[18] looked very decent and polite. It was distributed 28. February 2008. I introduced myself first and I talked about blogs, my research and my Master's thesis. I placed a link to webpage with the questionnaire, so after one click bloggers were directed to the questionnaire. I added that answers will be used just for academic purposes and I put the word of thanks in the end.

After first e-mail I received posts from bloggers on my e-mail address, what surprised me. I didn't expect that the communication between us can begin so easily. I got some positive reactions, when people gave thanks to me and wished me a good luck. One blogger wrote "I am very interested in your research, thus I completed your questionnaire". Another sent me "Thank you for sending me the questionnaire. How did I deserve to be a part in so interesting survey?" On the other side I got negative reactions too. A woman wrote "Your questionnaire seems to be more about personal information than about blogs". And a man posted "I don't know, maybe I am paranoid today, but I don't believe you". Every time I answered to each blogger separately and I tried to explain very politely the misunderstandings. The woman realized that her personal information won't be published and she completed the questionnaire. However, I had more problematic conversation with the man. He replied to me with long e-mail where he mentioned all reservations he has with my research. I chose just some: "It is not usual to use polite form of speech in the community of bloggers"; "I understand that a graduate student is someone who finished the school already, thus why do you write your Master's thesis now?" And he continued "Your questionnaire is on the public domain. However, I would expect the university's domain with

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[18] Available in Appendix

logo. Also, I would like to see the university's list with your name and picture, so I know you are really a student." There were much more, what he didn't like. After all and it was a surprise for me, he filled out the questionnaire.

The second e-mail I mailed out 4. March 2008. The main structure of the text stayed the same. However, according to negative feedback, I corrected two sentences. Instead of "graduate student" I put "an graduating student". More bloggers mentioned that they would like to be informed about the results of my research, thus I put a sentence in the mail "I will inform you about the survey results". Even this information was placed in the questionnaire I affirmed it in the e-mail.

I received new reactions from my respondents again. This time I had more positive responses. People were glad "I appreciate very much, that I can take part in your survey", or "I am looking forward to see the results", "I cross the fingers" and "Good luck with your thesis". A negative answer I got from one man "I recommend you to choose a better system for gaining the information. The domain you use, fails to meet all the requirements. I recommend you too, to get a help from a sociologist to invent your questions". In spite of the troubles, he completed the questionnaire few days after we had a discussion through e-mails.

I modified the e-mail form for the third time [19] on 17. March 2008 and I mailed fifty e-mails out. I changed the salutation from "Dear Mr., Mrs." to "Dear blogger" and I re-wrote the text from the formal terms. I realised that in bloggers' community people write formally very rarely and that my polite form may arouse scepticism among the respondents. Thus I used of the second person as the familiar form of address in the text. As I mentioned before, this period was the fastest one. Respondents answered back within one-two days. I also didn't get any negative responses this time. Bloggers sent me back only praises. For example "It was a pleasure to participate in your research", "I hope my answers will help you", or "I am glad to help you and I appreciate that you mailed me".

After the respondents filled out questions in the questionnaire I started to gather the results. From ethnographic observation I had my notes about blogs, bloggers and Slovak

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[19] Available in the Appendix

blogosphere. From the questionnaire I had to work very hard to gather the results. The closed answers usually brought quantitative method of the proceeds. The results had to be counted and divided into clusters. The open-ended questions were probably even harder to collect, because every blogger had different answers. I had to find out similarities among respondents so I could come to results.

6 RESULTS

This study uses mixed methods: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative method is used in the ethnographical observation where I can't process the results numerically. I reached the results by qualitative method in part of the questionnaire where I asked open-ended questions.

The quantitative research method is applied for data which I collected numerically from the questionnaire. Data contains mainly demographical or time information from the sample.

Through the ethnographical study I discovered that the strongest motivation for blogging is "providing documentary and opinions"[20]. These bloggers write about technologies or graphic design or things which they are interested in. It follows "documenting one's life" and after goes "articulating ideas through writing". As I mentioned before, journal type of blogs is not so common among bloggers who have private domains. They use the blog usually as a tool for their work, business or presenting themselves. "Forming and maintaining community forums" doesn't belong to the motives which would be important among Slovak bloggers who possess blogs' domains. They value highly comments from audiences, but they don't contribute much to enlarge the community. As I observed, they already have a group of friends or people they like to link to.

The questionnaire was much more complex method I used for my thesis. There were 126 respondents to the survey in total[21]. I archived all e-mail addresses of the respondents. I sent out 126 e-mails with legends to the survey and links to the questionnaire. From them, 3 e-mails returned back to me because of invalid addresses. 21 respondents didn't react at all on my e-mails. It means that bloggers got my mails but they didn't open it or they read and deleted my post, or they don't use the e-mail addresses anymore.

To sum it up, 102 bloggers opened my survey. The IP addresses of all responses are recorded and accesses from computers with the same IP addresses are viewed as accesses

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[20] According to Nardi study (Nardi, 2004)

[21] Graph available in Table of Figures

from the same responder. In addition, responses with missing data are also excluded from analysis. As a result, I have 50 responses for analysis[22] in total. That means that 50 bloggers opened the questionnaires and answered on all questions I asked them. To put it in percentage, 49% of all respondents who opened the questionnaires finished all questions. Therefore, from all respondents I sent out e-mails (126), about 39,7% were bloggers who completed all questions.

6.1 Measurement scales/ models

6.1.1 Demographic data

The demographic traits of the bloggers, who fully completed the survey, are as follows:

- There are more women (55.3%) bloggers than men (44.7%).

- The average age of the blogger is 27 years.

- The highest representation of bloggers has Bratislava district with 42%[23]. Then there follow: Banska Bystrica district with 8,9%, Zilina district with 8,9%, Kosice district with 8,9%, Trnava district with 6,7%, Presov district with 6,7%, Nitra district with 4% and Trencin district with 4,4%. I had respondents who also live abroad, but they are Slovaks and they blog in Slovak language (8,9%).

- The last information from demographic features is about bloggers' occupation. The majority of Slovak bloggers are students (29,5%). The second biggest group is formed with people who work with IT technologies as computers, Web, Internet and programmes (20,5%). Also there are bloggers from school system and education as teachers (11,4%) and almost the same number (11,3%) reached bloggers, who work in media and advertising area. There are not much managers who blog (9%) and over 2,3% of bloggers are entrepreneurs. The same percentage of bloggers are currently unemployed (2,3%). I collected quite high number of "others",

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[22] Graph is available in Table of Figures

[23] See the Table of Pictures

who's jobs are in government, non-profit organisations and they work in the administration (13,6%).

6.1.2 Blog

The respondents possess mainly the private domains in Slovakia. They present 35,7% of all blogs. Bloggers who post on Blog.sme.sk are the second largest group (30,3%). Slovaks who blog on Blog.pravda.sk are about 21,4% and just over 10,7% of Slovak bloggers use Blogger.com. Trend has 1,8% and places the last position.

Blogs' phenomenon is quite new in Slovakia, what demonstrates the fact that one Slovak blogger operates one or more blogs just 1 year, 6 months and 9 days in average. In addition, 24,4% of Slovak bloggers possess more than just one blog.

The question about the blogs' themes brought interesting findings. Slovak bloggers own blogs which have mainly journal's character. They like to archive their life stories, pictures and events (34%). The second most favourite theme among Slovak bloggers is the technology as Internet, Web, computers, Microsoft and so one. They provide about 20,5% of the blogs. The blogs with short stories, poems and postings about travelling represent over 18,2% of the blogs in Slovakia. Many respondents expressed that they possess blogs with relationships' topics (13,6%). Politics and economy matters make about 11,4%. Bloggers who don't have any specific topic are over 6,8% and the same number represents blogs with health and beauty contents (6,8%). Blogs about marketing; science; music or design place on the same level over 4,5%.

In the questionnaire, bloggers might answer why they read other's blogs. They got a scale with numbers and they were supposed to tick which answer fit the most and which the least[24]. The first cluster contains reasons which fit the most to Slovak bloggers. The second cluster represents the middle values and the last cluster is about reasons which bloggers do not consider as important:

1. Blogs are unique in their contents (40%);

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[24] The questionnaire is available in the Appendix

For fun (29,5%);

To seek for new information (24,4%).

2. I am finding a good quality of information (26,7%);

   To seek for new information (24,4%);

   Blogs are truthful (24,4%).

3. For up-to-date information (31,8%);

   I want an unbiased commentaries and information about events (21,2%);

   I am spending my time (22,2%).

The overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed that they seek mainly information about other peoples' lives (26,8%). Then they look for information about travelling, short stories and belief (17%). News about economical and political events in Slovakia and worldwide are attractive for about 14,6% of Slovak bloggers. Searching for the data about computers' technologies and programming like just 12% of all respondents. 7,3% of bloggers seek for the marketing and design news. Then they follow: music; science; relationships; opinions about society; all have the same value (4,8%). There are respondents who don't search for nothing special and then there are bloggers who look actually for something unique and special, but they didn't have a concrete answer (12%).

Even if blogging is not a long tradition among Slovaks yet, bloggers already had the time to change the design and improve their blogs' contents. 80% of all bloggers answered that they have already modified their blogs since they started to post.

Many bloggers changed the blogs' contents or the templates[25]. 48% claimed that they transformed the contents because they wanted to improve the level of writings to be more interesting for the reader. 38% of the bloggers exchanged the template, appearance or design of the blogs. About 35% of respondents modified the theme since they began with writing. Many of them expressed that they had had to change it because they found the right direction.

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[25] One respondent might have more answers

The reasons why actually Slovak bloggers decided to change their blogs vary. The majority (37%) answered that because "I changed". That means that their personality or thoughts changed. Therefore, they exchanged theirs blogs too. Interesting finding is that a lot of respondents (28%) said that they altered their blogs because the theme of the blog had made headway. That means that they progress in themes' aims. About 14% expressed that they wanted to differ from others or they became more specialized. Some just "Felt for that" (11%). Important factor which pushes Slovak bloggers to change their blogs is the feedback from readers (11%). Only 2% don't know why they do alterations on the blogs.

The last information about blogs concerned the future plans. The majority of bloggers (44%) want to keep writing, they "Wish not to stop". Others have higher goals with their blogs like to publish a book or start with writing for the newspapers (14,6%). 17% of the respondents have no special plans for the future. The same amount (17%) would like to improve their blogs as for example to start a video-blogs or they want to improve a design. The rest of the bloggers (7,3%) are waiting for an inspiration or are having the "bloggers' falloff" right now.

6.1.3   Blogging

The respondents have been devoted themselves to blogging approximately 1 year, 7 months and 15 days in average. One blogger spends usually 4 hours and 12 minutes per week with blogging and posting. To put it in a nutshell, a Slovak blogger spends more than 36 minutes per day writing on her or his own blog. However, people spend much more time with reading others' blogs. They post the comments and they link much more often compared to the time, they spend with their own blogs. In the average, they use 9 hours, 18 minutes weekly, that is 1 hour and 20 minutes every day. Therefore, bloggers are highly influenced by reading others' blogs. They stated for over 66,7% that their postings are affected by what they read from the Web.

It is still very popular to hide one's identity from the public in Slovakia. More than a half of the respondents expressed that they blog under a pseudonym (55%). On the other side, there is quite a high number of bloggers who publish their names (45%).

I asked the respondents during which part of the day they usually blog and I got interesting answers: 40% of all bloggers blog in the evening or in the night-time. Slovak blog-

gers have some kind of "urge" to write, because over 26,6% expressed that they post when they "feel that they have to" or when they are "inspired" to do that. People who blog anytime they want are about 24,4%. Then 8,9% of the respondents said that they blog when they find a time for that. More Slovaks blog when they are happy (11%) however, 8,9% claimed that they write usually when they are sad or feel depressed.

Motivation[26] in blogging is one of the most discussed topics of today. Bloggers in Slovakia are mainly motivated to blog by themselves. That means that 46,7% of them encourage their own feelings, thoughts and experiences. The second biggest motivation impulse among bloggers is the events which occur in everyday lives. People are inspired by their lives or others' lives of 28,9%. Then the "audience pressure" represents the strong motivation factor for the bloggers for 24,4%. Some respondents said that the stimulus is their own work (13,3%). For others, the main factors why they blog is the desire to reach higher goals (4,4%) and to share happiness with others.

In this thesis I try to find an answer why do people blog in Slovakia. Results[27] from the questionnaire show that:

1. The most important reason why do people blog is that Slovaks can express their feelings through blogging (61,4%).

2. The second highest motivation is, that Slovaks blog because they communicate with others and they reach a variety of opinions (40,9%).

3. Blogs are entertainment and fun for Slovaks (31,8%).

4. Bloggers blog because it is a relax for them (31,8%).

5. Slovaks blog because they feel that they can change something when they publish their statements and thoughts on the blogs (27,3%).

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[26] One respondent might response with more answers

[27] Respondents got a scale with numbers and they were supposed to tick which answer fit the most and which the least (from 9-1).

6. The sense of community is very important factor of motivation for blogging (20,9%).

The respondents answered why they blog, moreover they mentioned also what kinds of signs do not make them blog. They are:

1. Blogging is not an addiction. Bloggers don't feel as the addicts (31,8%).

2. For Slovaks is not important to communicate through blogs with their friends and families (30,2%).

3. Blogs are definitely not an escape from reality for Slovak bloggers (22,7%).

Very important for this research is also to find out what makes bloggers to like the blogging. These findings will bring more understanding for reasons why Slovaks became so avid bloggers too. Thus, according to the research[28], Slovaks like the most on blogging:

1. The contact with audience; Immediate reactions; Discussion with readers; Comments; Feedback; Compliments from readers (36,6%).

2. Many bloggers appreciate the most the freedom; The freedom of expression; No limits, no frontiers (29,3%).

3. 26,8% of Slovaks like the most that they have a good feeling from blogging; Good feeling that their create something that has a meaning; Self- fulfilment; To enrich others.

4. Some bloggers expressed that they like blogging because it is a therapy; Virtual and group therapy; Catharsis (12%).

5. For 9,8% of respondents blogging allow them to write. They like writing on blogging the most.

6. 4,8% of bloggers don't know exactly what they like on blogging.

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[28] One respondent might have more than one answer

6.1.4 Audience

From previous findings it might be assumed that audience or readers are very important driving power for Slovak bloggers. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (78,3%) answered that during they are writing on the blogs they think about their readers too.

In the questionnaire I asked bloggers why they think people are interested in reading their blogs. I received results which vary in the measurement values. The majority of bloggers think that people read their blogs because they write about interesting themes (26%). 19% of the respondents said that the reason why their audience read them is that they bring day-to-day information about events. Very interesting finding is that the blogs has two kinds of writers: those who want to differ and they are specialized in some area (16,7%); and those who don't want to differ from others and they post about the same problems as every one else has (19%). The rest of bloggers think they are read for fun (7%), or because people know them (7%) and also about 7% don't know the reason.

6.1.5 Comments

Comments are the un-replaceable part of the blogs. 97,8% of Slovak bloggers claim that they are getting comments from their readers. According to the questionnaire[29], there are three types of commentators (the readers who write the comments):

1.   Those who write objective reactions on the articles and they give advices concerned to the blog's content (58%).

2.   The readers who speak highly of the blogger and have just positive reactions (27,9%).

3.   The "provocateurs" who poke the bloggers, criticise them and their blogging (20,9%)

One of the reasons why bloggers post is to get the feedback and the comments from the readers. In the questionnaire I asked what they feel when they get the comments[30]. The

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[29] One respondents might have more answers

overwhelming majority from the respondents answered that they feel "happiness" and "satisfaction" that they captured readers' attention (79,5%). Another group of Slovak bloggers expressed that they "need to answer back immediately" after they get a comment (13,6%). Many bloggers feel "anger" and "desperation" from negative feedback and criticism (11,3%). Some of them are curious and feel "impatience" (9%).

The reason why bloggers feel as they described is that they see it's not useless what they are doing "My readers caress my ego", and they are satisfied (39,5%). Others like that the communication between "the blogger and the audience" works. They said that it's important to get a feedback (34%). For some is this feeling the driving power for motivation to keep writing (10,5%). Few respondents showed their disappointment form misunderstandings (5,6%). 10,5% of the respondents didn't answer on this question.

6.1.6 Community

In the last part of the questionnaire I tried to discover whether there exists the bloggers' community in Slovakia. More than a half of the respondents answered (65,2%) that they link to others' blogs. That means that they have a contact with bloggers and they create so called "net of bloggers".

The most significant result is that 91,3% of all Slovak bloggers expressed that they "know" other bloggers. 73,9% of the respondents said that they can call it "relationship" what is between bloggers in Slovakia.

Therefore I asked the bloggers then, if they can characterize this "relationship". The overwhelming majority (80,5%) said that this relationship means a lot for them, that is a "friendship" and not only virtual, but personal too. Others claimed that it is for them the "kinship" and the "community" (8,3%). Some of the respondents answered that bloggers' relationship has the form of "business contacts". They said "We know each other as colleagues" (8,3%). The rest don't think there is the relationship between bloggers (2,8%).

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[30] One respondent might have more answers

Slovak bloggers have the sense of community. Moreover, 88,9% of the respondents answered that they think there is the "weblog community" in Slovakia. On the blogrolls Slovak bloggers collect the lists of links which contain the blogs they like to read. In addition, they have other bloggers with who they want to stay in touch on the lists of links (77,3%).

Most of the respondents have placed their friends on the lists of links (44,7%). They said "virtual and real friends"[31]. Almost the same number of Slovak bloggers (42%), have there their favourite blogs which they find unique and they like to read. 7,8% of the respondents collect and put on the blogrolls the technical information. About 13% don't have any list of links.

The blogrolls usually say about the bloggers' tastes and interests (44%), then it means that Slovak bloggers like to have a list of friends or people who's blogs they like to read (41%). About 5,8% of the respondents like to accumulate on the list of links the technical information and over 11,7% don't have any lists.

6.2   Validity and reliability

6.2.1   Validity and reliability of the sample

I used the random selection to find the appropriate sample. However, I tried to have the respondents from all parts of the Slovak Republic, so sometimes I had to forget on random pick. The problem was, that I found mainly bloggers from Bratislava district, thus I had to skip some of them and look for bloggers from other parts of Slovakia too.

I might have the doubts with the random selection in the case when I had difficulties to find the addresses. I searched for bloggers and so little of them publish the e-mail addresses on the Web. That's why I had to continue in searching till I found someone with address. I may skip bloggers who may answer differently, thus this may skew the results.

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[31] One respondent might have more than one answer

Another problem with validity and reliability might be that I used the search engines and server locators as Zoznam.sk, Atlas.sk and Centrum.sk. Search engines might not find the key words, which were "blog" and "Slovakia" in servers as Blogger.com or others. It might be the reason why so little Slovaks have, according to this survey, blogs on Blogger.com. This could affect the results of the analysis.

Even I produced the list of bloggers – the sample I couldn't know whether all e-mail addresses are valid. After I send out e-mails to the respondents I saw that three of them came back to me. Thus I had to search for substitutes.

I might have worries about the number of response rate on e-mails. The e-mail unfortunately belongs to a medium which doesn't have high reliability among people. Even if I sent each e-mail separately with salutation of each blogger, thus it didn't look as a spam, 17% of the people didn't react at all. They might not use their e-mail addresses anymore or they might not open my e-mails because they didn't trust me.

Since I have done all research by myself I couldn't allow have a bigger sample. In the end I had 50 finished responses what might be not enough for the validity of the survey. The sample might not meet the truthful characteristics of the Slovak bloggers. It would be needed to repeat the survey with larger sample and compare the results.

The quantitative Web based survey was used in this thesis. The problem underlying here is that it is not possible to know who did fill out the survey. The person receiving the survey may not be the same person filling out the survey. It would have been conceivable to develop a deeper insight by having an additional qualitative survey. In addition, I can't assess if the answers are truthful or not. It is be impossible to verify the results or to prove that someone lied or filled out the answers just for fun.

It is impossible to know if ones who answered on my e-mail and filled out the questionnaire differ from those who didn't answer. Non-response, by itself, should not be a cause for concern. But when non-respondents differ from respondents in relevant ways, one have to account for bias.

6.2.2 Validity and reliability of the questionnaire

I got the criticism from some bloggers about the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The Web based survey is placed on public domain. Some bloggers didn't trust to

the public domain and they wished to see the questionnaire placed on the school or university's domain. However, this was impracticable to accomplish.

In the course of the survey, I had the serious technical problems with Survey Monkey domain. Four people complained that after they had filled out all 38 questions in the questionnaires and clicked on the button "done" the whole survey disappeared. I tried to find out what might be the problem, because I saw there were really no saved answers from them. I wrote twice to the service help of the domain, but I haven't got any reply. This could affect the results of the survey. I might look very unprofessional in the eyes of the bloggers.

Some of the respondents had problems with understanding the questions. I discovered that people usually didn't understand follow-up type of questions. For example "What does the list of links say about" and "What is the reason to feel like that". They filled the column with a question mark "?" or they wrote "I don't understand the question". This answers had count into the results, even I couldn't use them. This might skew the survey's results.

Another problem popped up when some of the bloggers wrote instead of a meaningful answer a sign or an emoticon or other "funny" sign as: "x", "-", "☺", "uff" and so one. Their "answers" counted to the survey's results because the Web programme is set up that since there is something written in the column, it considers it as a relevant answer. This can mislead the results of the survey.

There were few questions related to time as "How long have you kept your current blog?" or "How long have you been blogging"? Some bloggers expressed that they had a problem to calculate the outcome. They would prefer the scale with numbers better. Others didn't like too personal questions as "How old are you" or "Describe your occupation". They would prefer here the scale with prepared answers too.

To come to the results I had to count many numbers, especially in the qualitative part of the survey. I might make a numerical mistake somewhere, even I tried to be very careful and I verified the outcome twice. In addition, I had to round off every number, thus the results might be biased. This can skew the analysis of the survey.

In open-ended questions' types it happened almost every time that the respondents had more answers on just one question. For example "How has it changed (blog)", some of

them answered "Because I changed and due to feedback". "I changed" is one cluster and "The feedback" is another. Therefore the sum might make more than 100%, what might skew the validity of the survey. In addition, one blogger might possess more blogs, so he or she has to have more than just one answer.

7   ANALYSIS

7.1   Interpretation of models

7.1.1   Demographic data

According to the results from questionnaire, more women (55,3%) sent back the answers than men (44,7%). From the ethnographical observation I explored that more men possess blogs than women. According to AIMmonitor there are more men who are using internet services (51,65 %) than women (Mediaresearch, 2007). Thus there come out more reasons for explanation.

I could observe from e-mail communication that women had mainly positive reactions on my survey however, men had the negative e-mails. Women sent me back usually very polite and nice mails where they expressed their favour with my research. From men I have got some complains about my style of writing, form of the questions, the Web domain and so one. From my point of view, men are those who work with technologies and programmes. That might make them more critical about technical interpretation of the research. It was much more difficult to acquire the men's trust than women's.

This finding makes me to think that the results of my research show that women-bloggers were more cooperative and more open for the research. Many of them found the time and filled the questionnaires. On the other side, men- bloggers were more suspicious to provide personal information and, according to the e-mails, sluggish to fill out more than it's necessary. In general, more reliable answers I received from women than the men too. Women tried to answer in long sentences and many times they expressed their feeling very vividly. Compared to the men who answered mainly in short and curt sentences or write just one word.

To sum it up, my survey says that women are the active majority in bloggers' population in Slovakia. Men own more blogs, but they do not present themselves and their blogs so explicitly than women do. Therefore, my results display that women are the majority.

The research shows that the average age among Slovak bloggers is less than thirty. From another finding it's obvious, that majority of the bloggers in Slovakia are students. I see here a schism, because a student is a person till 26 years old in average. The explanation

might be that now students in Slovakia study longer. The reason might be travelling abroad to earn some extra money. Since I don't have any evidence which would prove it, it is just a speculation.

The twenty-seven years old student might be a person who is not in hurry to have a "normal" life. I belong to this generation and I can say from my point of view, that this might be the trend of this generation. They don't want to have the stereotype lives and work from the morning till the evening. It might be that this generation likes studies because they encourage people to travel and allow them to have more free time. However, I don't have any research which would proves my statement, thus it might be just a speculation.

The results display that the majority of Slovak bloggers are from Bratislava district, what means from the capital city and its surroundings situated in the West of Slovakia. Compared it to the GfK survey from 2008, which says that the highest number of computers is situated around big towns as Bratislava, Kosice and Zilina (GfK, 2008b), my results might be truthfull.

7.1.2 Blog

The majority of Slovak bloggers possess private domains' blogs. This might demonstrate that the prices are not expensive for keeping a private domain in Slovakia[32] (Forpsi, 2008). On the other side, from ethnographical observation I can say that to own a private domain means higher prestige than to have blog under Blogger.com or Blog.sme.sk and so one. Slovak bloggers want to have blog with original style and design. They need to differ and be unique. The appearance of the blog is important for their readers or for their business. The second largest blog provider is, according to the results, Blog.sme.sk. As Dyda wrote in his article, Blog.sme.sk has become the most successful blog service because all finalists in the Blog category in Slovakia Awards for Journalism 2006 were Sme bloggers (Dyda, 2008).

From the research, the most common theme among Slovak bloggers is technologies as Internet, Web, Microsoft, computers, programmes and so one. Compared to the ethno-

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[32] According to Forpsi it costs 468Sk (approx. 14EUR/ year)

graphical observation, bloggers who possess the private domains write mostly about technologies and they are in majority men. The second most favourite topic for posting is short tales from everyday lives and travelling. I observed that mainly woman possess blogs with these subjects and they are the bloggers from Blog.sme.sk in majority.

Interesting result is that some Slovak bloggers have more blogs than just one and, from the ethnographical observation I can say, that they usually differ in theme. If there is a blogger who has two blogs, in overwhelming majority there is one journal and one knowledge blog. This finding differ from the recent surveys from America and Japan, where journals are the overwhelming majority of blogs (Viegas, 2005). The knowledge blogs are mainly about politics or technology events (Viegas, 2005).

The bloggers in Slovakia like to read other's blogs very much, what display the results that they spend more than one and half hour per day by browsing blogs. They said that the main reason why they do that is because blogs are unique in their contents. Bloggers also expressed that they read others' blogs for fun and relax or they search for new information. From the ethnographical observation, Slovaks like to read other peoples' stories. They like to see that somebody has the same problems or on the other side they need to see that they differ from others, that they are special. This part of my research might be a motive for psychological study. The clusters of bloggers who possess blogs about technologies mainly seek for new information and data on the Web. Those who read about other peoples' stories like that blogs are unique in the contents (life stories) and they read them also because it's fun and kind of relax (they can laugh on someone's story).

As I mentioned before, the special feature of Slovak bloggers is that they want to have their blogs looking good. That is the reason why the majority of them already already changed the design. The want to attract the audience and to avoid the discussion, that's why they change their contents too. They expressed that "My style of writing is more mature" and "I put myself into the reader's shoes place" or "My style of writing is more relaxed now". This might implicate that after more than one and half year (in average) Slovak bloggers already got use to blog. That's why the majority answered that their blog changed because "I changed". Their point of view on blogs and readers have changed, theirs posting has become more relaxed and the theme has "made a headway".

According to the survey, the bloggers want to keep blogging in the future too. One blogger expressed "I won't stop and I will devote myself into blogging so often and intensive as it will be possible. If I would stop to blog, one part of me would die. Many people don't understand it, but writing is a part of my life which fulfils me and helps me to do want I really like. It's like thinking. I like thinking and the writing is like all your thoughts would fall down on the paper." From blogger's statement I can say that blogging has become important part of blogger's life. Blogger's style of writing is very nice, you don't mention that you read a blog, but a book.

7.1.3 Blogging

The average Slovak blogger blog a bit longer than he or she possess the blog. That shows that first the blogger start with reading others' blogs and than, when it is not enough for him or her to just post the comments, the blogger creates the own blog. The difference is significant also in the amount of the time which the blogger spend with his or her blog and with reading others' blogs. The difference is bigger than one hour, what might display that the average Slovak blogger is hungry for new stories and information.

An interesting finding is that more than a half of bloggers blog under the pseudonym. According to the answers, bloggers expressed that they are afraid to uncover the real identity because people could misused it. As I mentioned in the theoretical part of my thesis, there is a young Slovak blogger who uncovered his homosexual identity on his blog and the public pressure hurt him and his family too. Therefore, the blogger is frightened to express the feelings and opinions under his or her real name. Slovak society is still not enough liberal in the way of thinking.

On the other side, there is quite high number of people who post under the real name (45%). From the ethnographical observation is obvious, that bloggers have to write under their real names on the Blog.sme.sk. They also have to publish their real photos. Even, I had a couple of bloggers who use the pseudonyms here too which look as a real name. Some of the people who have more than one blog use both: on the journal blogs where they express their feelings and emotions they post under the pseudonyms and on the knowledge blogs (or filter) they use their real names.

Blogging is strongly influenced by what the bloggers read on others' blogs. According to the questionnaire, bloggers who blog in the night-time fill their blogs mostly with sad stories. "I blog when I am sad, in the evening when I feel depressed". Other blogger said "I blog when I feel for that, when I feel inspired or when I am angry". Just some bloggers blog when they feel happy. These respondents usually said that they write "anytime". This part of the study could be an impulse for psychological exploration. It evokes in me, that those bloggers who work hard whole day and are fed up of awkward colleagues' behaviour, post in the night-time and express their dark thoughts which they need to get rid of. I mentioned it before, that for some blogging is a kind of catharsis. Bloggers, who have more free jobs that they can post anytime during the day are more happy, thus they make jokes on theirs blog too.

The last finding relates the next result about bloggers' motivation. The respondents replied that the main motivation factor for them is "myself". "I motivate myself. It's all about the real life's situations and, of course, it's about my life's situations. I want to share with somebody else and I feel that maybe it could help that person too." Another blogger said "It's the same feeling as when you confess to your best friend". One blogger used the word "catharsis". "It is the catharsis and a joy from writing, and meeting with other bloggers".

My research question of the thesis is why do people blog in Slovakia. From the ethnographical observation and the questionnaire the answer is: People blog in Slovakia because through blogging they express their feelings and communicate with others to share new information. The respondents expressed also that to blog means fun and entertainment for them beside which they can relax. Others blog because it brings them the feeling that they might change something. In addition, by blogging they do something what has a meaning not just for them but for other people too. This gives them the sense of community where bloggers know each other and their relationships are based on friendships.

Slovak bloggers appreciate the most on blogging that they can communicate with the audience. "I like the discussion and I like the comments which I receive, even they might be negative". "I like the feedback and that I know my readers which are my friends". Some of the bloggers wrote that they like to be praised by others. One blogger said that she appreciates the "feeling from good done work". According to these results, for Slovaks is very important the feeling of self-fulfilment.

Other respondents like that blogging has no limits or borders in expression. "I like the freedom of expression". "I like that I can write about everything I feel". "I like the freedom of writing that I can post whatever I want". For some, blogging has become an irreplaceable experience. One blogger wrote "I love that feeling when I am done with writing and I read my article. It's something inexpressible amazing I can't compare this feeling to nothing. …but maybe I can…It is like when you are very hungry and you eat so your stomach is full, and then you go to take a smoke. But this feeling doesn't know people who don't smoke. So it is with the feeling of finished article which doesn't know people who don't write."

7.1.4   Audience

As the results display, audience or readers are very important driving power for bloggers. Almost eighty percent of Slovak bloggers think about their audiences when they write on the blogs. According to the majority of responses, audiences are attracted on interesting topics. The bloggers claim that more attractive topic you have, more readers you get. The second important factor is to have day-to-day updated information on the blog. However, this finding is not new already the definition for the blog is "Frequently modified webpages containing data entries listed in reverse chronological sequence" (Rodzvilla, 2002, p.3). Slovak bloggers are very flexible in the way to how catch the interest of the audiences. From the survey there might be two groups of bloggers. To the first group belong bloggers who want to differ from others not just with meaning of the content but from design of weblog too. According to the ethnographical observation, these bloggers are usually specialized in the unique topic as Microsoft systems or iTunes or SEO[33] and so one. The second group contains bloggers who don't want to differ from other people. From the observation, these bloggers usually own journal types of blogs and write about life stories.

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[33] Search Engine Optimization

7.1.5 Comments

Almost ninety-eight percent of Slovak bloggers are getting comments from the readers. The overwhelming majority of comments are objective reactions on the articles. The ethnographical observation proved that commentators are the bloggers themselves or just "ordinary" people who like to read different types of news. A lot of readers like to give a positive feedback to the bloggers, however there are so called "provocateurs", who "look for something just to criticize". One blogger expresses "The majority of comments I am getting are just delusions. On Blog.sme.sk the comments has degenerated to insult attacks. Therefore, I already turned off comments on Blog.sme.sk domain".

Even bloggers might get a negative feedback, from observation there are more positive reactions from audiences. So the bloggers in almost eighty percent feel happiness and joy when they are commented. They need to answer immediately back to the reader to keep the discussion longer. Positive comments keep the bloggers writing. According to the Miura study (Miura, 2007), bloggers need to benefit from writing. The comments allow it and encourage the bloggers to persist in blogging. The negative comments turn Slovak bloggers to be angry and desperate. "I used to be very sad every time I was criticised. Now I got used to it and I don't care. I found out that some people are arrogant and they have the need to humiliate someone just because they can hide behind the anonymity". Miura found out in his study that the negative feedback, for example criticism, complaints or criticise, did not have a significant effect on satisfaction of bloggers (Miura, 2007). So, as the blogger said, the critics don't have big effect on the blogging because they can get used to it.

The main reason of the feeling from comments is the satisfaction. Miura pointed three variants of satisfaction they need to be fulfilled among bloggers. First is to benefit to itself. Slovak bloggers expresses that "Each compliment raises my ego", "Comments are the motivation for me", "I am satisfied with myself". To benefit to itself in Slovakia means to "increase one's ego". The second benefit which Miura explored is to benefit to relationship with others. In the Slovakia bloggers called it "The communication works". Blogger feel satisfied when "I got a feedback from people", "I know that my writing is interesting for someone", "I see that someone read my postings and that my work is not useless". The Miura's benefit to information handling skill can be interpreted that Slovak bloggers exchange the information. As an example I can use the statement from one blogger "I feel satisfied

when I see that the reader understood my work", or "I am satisfied when people are satisfied".

7.1.6 Community

From the ethnographical observation I can claim that bloggers have tendency to crowd into the clusters and communicate between each other. Almost each blog I have seen has a blogroll with list of links. List of links contains links to friends, favourite websites or blogs. According to the study, majority of the bloggers said that they have their friends on the blogrolls then they have their favourite blogs they like to read. One blogger expressed "I have there my close acquaintances and blogs of my virtual friends". Slovak bloggers keep links of their friends or interesting blogs because they want to visit these pages often, thus they archived them on the blog. Mostly they keep the blogs which are common to theirs in the tastes or interests. These people are searching for new information, thus they like blogs according to their contents. Others have links to the bloggers who they "like to read". This group of people benefits to relationship with others (Miura, 2007). The small number of the respondents answered that they archive the literature, books or files on their blogrolls. They might be the teachers, scholars or students. Toril Mortensen (Mortensen&Walker, 2002), a researcher, mentioned this blogs' feature in her work that most ideas a researcher has never make it to a formal article or book. They are forgotten or cast aside because they don't fit the whole. Weblogs elucidate the constant flow of thought and the ever-changing nature of research. Here they preserve their ideas. Thus blogrolls might mean for some Slovak the same.

According to the questionnaire, the results demonstrated that Slovakia has the bloggers' community. Bloggers link to each other, discuss topics, exchange the information and opinions. Usually they know each other virtually or they meet in real lives. Some bloggers expressed that they go out together to take a beer. The majority of the bloggers called it "relationship" what is between them and other bloggers or readers. They value this relationship as a "friendship" in more than eighty percent of bloggers. "We respect each other and we help to each other", said one blogger. Another wrote "It is like when you go out with a bunch of friends and you talk about things you would never tell to no body else. It is like when you come home and ask your family: hi, how was your day today? It is a community from which every time somebody leaves and to which every time somebody else arrives. It

is a unique cluster of people who's opinion you know very well, however they surprise you every time with something new".

Slovak bloggers who live and work abroad have become close friends through blogs there. The blogger from London wrote "In London the bloggers' community turned to friendships. We meet not just virtually, but we go out together personally too. We are not just bloggers, we are friends! These relationships are based on the mutual support and motivation".

The most interesting I find the result from the questionnaire, where 8,3% of the respondents have found their "loves"- girlfriends and boyfriends. The bloggers wrote that they had met first virtually and then when they saw they like each other, they met in real life. One bloggers stated "I have very deep relationship with one blogger now", or another said "I have a boyfriend who is a blogger too. We met on the bloggers' meeting". Bloggers in Slovakia present themselves as very nice and friendly people who have a lot of friends around- on the Web and in the real lives too.

7.2   Profile of the average Slovak blogger

According to my questionnaire, a typical Slovak blogger is a woman[34]. She is twenty- seven years old and she is a student. She lives in the Bratislava district. Her blog is the personal journal type and she spends usually more than thirty-fives minutes daily by writing on her blog. She writes about her personal live, her problems and joys. She blogs about her feelings, personal opinions and thoughts. The Slovak blogger possess the private domain blog.

She likes to read others' blogs because they are unique in the contents, for fun and to gain new information. The blogger spends more than one hour and twenty minutes by blogging every day. She seeks for events from other people's lives, for short stories and experiences from travelling. The Slovak blogger's posting is affected by what she reads on the Web.

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[34] I explained this problem in Analysis

She also thinks every time she writes about her readers. However, she blogs under the pseudonym to protect her identity from ruthless readers. Usually she blogs in the evening or in the night or when she is inspired to write. To her motivation's factors belong her feelings, thoughts and experiences from every day's life. She blogs because she can express her feelings and communicate with others to exchange experiences and information. The blogger likes to blog because of the contact with readers and never- ending discussion.

She appreciates on blogging the freedom of expression and that she can write about anything without limits. She feels satisfied when she posts a good article because she wants to enrich others too. She gets comments from her readers which are mainly objective reactions with advices from people who are in common. She is very happy every time she gets a comment because it brings her the satisfaction that she kept the reader's attention. The blogger needs to answer immediately back to the reader to keep the communication going.

She knows other bloggers virtually or from real life. She links to them frequently and she archives their addresses on her blog. The blogger feels that there is a friendship between Slovak bloggers and she respects other bloggers. She likes that she belongs to the bloggers' community in Slovakia.

8 DISCUSSION

I undertook the ethnographic observation and questionnaire research because I was most interested in the stories that bloggers would tell about their experiences with blogging. I wanted to uncover the nuances of understanding bloggers and the relationship that formed in the venue of the blogs. Ethno-methodological work is not without its challenges and doing ethnographic research in a virtual space is problematic in its own walls.

In virtual ethnographies specifically, the disembodied quality of interaction brings the authenticity of participants into question. For the participants who I did not meet face to face, I cannot verify that they are who they say they are. I can only piece together the nuggets of information they gave me through their blogs, via emails, in the questionnaire and listen to my own gut sense of whether they are presenting an authentic self or not. It is this disembodiment of the subject that contributes to making this study a virtual ethnographic project, the term virtual embodying the uncertainty inherent in a project that takes places in a mediated, non- geographic, and disembodied environment (Lenhart, 2005, p.33). Hine counsels "But rather than treating authenticity as a particular problem posed by cyberspace that the ethnographer has to solve before moving on to the analysis, it would be more fruitful to place authenticity in cyberspace as a topic at the heart of the analysis" (Hine, 2000, p. 49). Heeding Hines, I have done exactly that, examining the steps bloggers take to establish authenticity and how they evaluate it. As for the authenticity of the ethnography itself, I have involved myself in the world of blogs and blogging as both a reader and an author of one blog. I began reading blogs in late 2007 and began my own early blogging efforts in January 2008. Throughout gathering my cadre of participants and sending them e-mails with links to the questionnaire, I have also continued to follow their blogs. Lenhart claims that unlike other virtual ethnographies, the phenomenon of blogs can only be studied in a virtual mode (Lenhart, p.33).

The significant features of Slovak bloggers are their communicativeness. After I sent out the bunch of e-mails I got immediate answers from bloggers who were asking me questions about the research. They have never hesitated to express they opinions, even the reactions were negative. As I already mentioned before, it wasn't easy to acquire the trust of the bloggers. Many of them are very careful to uncover their personal information. There is a schism here that they write about their intimately feeling every day, but they better post un-

der another name. Probably, as some of them expressed, they have bad experiences with sly people around.

Through the questionnaire and the ethnographic observation I found the answer on the core question of all survey. The main research question was RQ: "Why do people blog in Slovakia"? The answer is "They blog because through blogging they express their feelings and communicate with others; to share, reach and exchange variety of opinions, experiences and information in never- endless discussion which brings them self-fulfilment".

When we know already the answer on the research question, it is time to test the work's hypothesis. I posed the hypothesis H: "I think that Slovaks blog because they want to exchange new information". One of the main reason why people blog in Slovakia is to reach a variety of opinions. The opinions might be considered as new information, thus the work hypothesis is right. However, there are more reasons, than just to reach a variety of information. People blog to express the feelings, communicate with others, gain a variety of opinions, for relax, for fun and so one.

To sum it up, it was nice to discover more about these people who are living around us and maybe we even don't know that they have a blog. From my point of view, the blogger is an author of a unique work.

8.1   Limitations and directions for future research

Although we have already the results which might help us in understanding the newest media phenomenon-blogs, this study has known limitations. Overcoming them can be a direction for future research.

First, there is no literature, documents or any studies about weblogs and bloggers from Slovakia yet. Therefore, I couldn't draw on experiences which would fit my thesis the best. Instead of that I used mainly literature from the United States of America. Compared to Slovakia, American culture and people differ in basic features. Thus the core theory for my thesis might not be appropriate for Slovaks bloggers.

Second, there were fifty respondents who answered correctly and I have included them to the survey. I would prefer to have larger sample to acquire more relevant results. The thesis would need to have more time so I could seek for more information and discover more from the phenomenon of the Slovak blogosphere.

Third, I would be glad for more help. Especially during the evaluation procedure I felt for more help to orientate me better in numbers. I am not a mathematician and I might make some mistakes. There would be necessary to have the help with English grammar too.

There is lack of scholars who would explore more about weblogs' problem in Slovakia. Nowadays, there are known four studies from students about blogs. From them just two are about bloggers motivation. There would be needed to explore these problems more into the depth. Blogging is increasing on its popularity each day, thus I believe, that soon there will be more studies about Slovak blogs.

One of the themes for future research might be wider, national sample of bloggers with more than 1000 respondents. In addition it would be needed to uncover bloggers behaviour and the way of thinking too. It might be interesting to know what life do they live, why they have a need to open their chests to the public. Or why are feelings and opinions so important for Slovak bloggers. Are they lonely? Do they have problems in families? These and many more questions should be answered not just from ethnographical point of research but by psychological exploration too.

Another theme would be needed to know is about media, marketing and communication. Blogs have already changed the way of communication between people. In addition, in core blogging is a communication tool that encompasses all communication models: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many (Banks, 2008). In Slovakia there is known interaction between mediocrity citizens. Thus it might be very beneficial to discover whether blogs are present here as a tool in the marketers' hands. There are already hundreds of studies from the United States of America and Japan where thousands of companies bet on blogging as a profitable way to attract the customers. Do companies in the Slovakia blog? If yes, which companies utilise blogging? Do they blog for customers or for employees? How does the relation with public changed?

Blogs are still so unexplored medium that there is unlimited space for future explorations. I believe that it will be still more and more students and scholars in Slovakia, who will discover the unexampled media phenomenon- blogs.

III. PROJECT

9 BLOGS IN SLOVAKIA

In my Master's thesis I examined the phenomenon of blogs in Slovakia and the reasons that explain the rising popularity of this new medium in a post-communist country where media had suffered long from the subordination of governments. The mainstream media have always been playing the crucial role in informing the Slovak citizens and creating the democracy. Throughout the democratising process in Slovakia, media especially have been putting the stress on the vital function of society. The mainstream media should the main which work as a watchdog of the public interest. However, not all journalists are encouraged to be muckrakers of the government yet in Slovakia. It is obvious that the main goal of the market-based media is to make profits. Freedom of expression and fair reporting are usually subordinated to the profit-making.

Democracy means the "voice of the people". The democracy is "the rule of majority" or "the will of majority". And especially now, new media have opened the frontiers for freedom of speech and expression where people are allowed to discuss their opinions openly in front of the whole World. Nowadays, the medium finally become a message. As Hugh Hewitt mentioned, this is the newest media revolution (Hewitt, 2005). The old information monopoly had an immense ability to decide where and when news would be news. That gatekeeping function is gone because blogs have rushed in to decide for themselves what matters. Blogging technology might have made from every person a muckraker. Thus mainstream media have been influenced by power of blogs and articles from bloggers. In Slovakia it is still not so obvious that a citizen would trigger a shower of criticism however, there are many analysts, economists, lawyers and so one who already talk openly about matters which occur behind the House's door.

According to the media analysts and journalists, the mainstream media will resist the boom of the new media's pressure. Although, according to statistics, the traditional media are loosing on their popularity among people and especially young populace inclines more to the new media. On the other side, the Slovak Radio has been the most trustworthy and unbiased source of information for long time in Slovakia (European Journalism Centre, 2007). Blogs are the newest media marvel which has spread out through World in the last ten years but in Slovakia they don't represent a serious threat to the traditional media yet.

In Slovakia blogs are increasing on their popularity since 2004 when daily Sme newspapers launched domain Blog.sme.sk where everybody could create a blog. Sme trigged the storm of blogs in Slovakia and Slovaks became a persistent bloggers. Blogs allow people to discuss about sensitive topics. In addition, no one will penalize them for what they published. Nobody will control their postings, thus they blog about what they need and feel to share. Blogs have opened the space for infinite debate among mediocrity citizens.

Blogs have many different meanings. However, dictionaries in Slovakia don't know this word yet. Even there are more than 30 millions of people around the World who blog and blogging have become familiar to them, in Slovakia the "boom" just has begun. To sum it up, blogs have many definitions, but they have to have few common features which specify them. They are frequently updated records which are chronologically arranged and saved. Blogs are a new medium which encourages ordinary people to become a journalists and companies to change their marketing strategies.

The numbers of blog users are rising in Slovakia. Especially last years were crucial in Slovak blogosphere. Before Sme made Blog.sme.sk, there were here only bloggers who were able to understand HTML language. From humans' history is evident, that all people who ever meant something, kept diaries. It is the best way how to archive the information and organise opinions and thoughts. On the other side, as one psychologist said, that the person who has a need to write a diary might have a problem. Nowadays, the life's tempo is so high thus is no time for emotions or thoughts in the daytime. This age expects from people to be tough and strong in fulfilling their social duties. So people have naturally a problem – they need to talk, share their experiences, exchange opinions and thoughts. Especially now, when technologies allow us to meet our friends through computers' screens, is much more comfortable to chat virtually.

In my Master's thesis I was inspired by studies from the United States of America and Japan where blogs have had their boom since approximately 1997. There are many interesting themes for studies, thus I picked more, combined them, and tried to adapt them to Slovaks' mentality. You can find in my thesis the Lenhart's motivation study (2005), Nardi's study about blogs (2004), Miura's influences study (2007), Olson's empirical study (2007) and many more.

I tried to uncover the demographical features of Slovak bloggers, the technical signs about their blogs, behavioural motives which encourage Slovaks to read the blogs and many more. However, the most important for my thesis was the research question RQ: Why do people blog in Slovakia? I came out from RQ and set the work's hypothesis H: I think that Slovaks blog because they want to exchange new information.

The results discovered that Slovaks have five major motivations for blogging: express one's feelings; communicate and acquire other's opinions; have fun and entertainment; to change something; to be a part of the community. Nardi explored in his study that people blog because they have the blogs as catharsis (Nardi, 2004). Slovak bloggers answered that they utilise blog to "express deeply felt emotions". In Nardi study people blog to provide a commentary and opinions (Nardi, 2004). The second largest group of Slovak bloggers expressed that they blog to "communicate with others and reach a variety of opinions". Bloggers from Slovakia blog to have fun and entertainment, compared to Nardi's study where respondents blog because they like "thinking by writing" (Nardi, 2004). Slovaks are encouraged to blog because they feel that they might change something, which is a special feature. Bloggers expressed that they want to help others'. Readers might have problems and bloggers might change others' lives with the stories. To share a life story might help to realize that others have the same problems too. They try to point out on events which politics and citizens don't see. Bloggers brings topics for discussion and they hope that they will contribute to enlightment. They try to change bad things to good by unvcovering the problems to the public. People blog to feel as part of the community in Slovakia compared to Americans who blog to form and maintain the community forum (Nardi, 2004). To sum it up, bloggers seem to have a common motivation features for blogging even they have different cultures. My work's hypothesis was right to the extent that it didn't include all motivation factors for blogging. To exchange information is one of the important elements which make people to blog.

CONCLUSION

Self-publishing is a huge trend today, which will certainly be growing over the next few years in Slovakia. The Web has enabled people to express themselves to the World in a whole new way. As more tools develop and are improved upon, people with no technical background or interest have the opportunity to discover this self-expression and at the same time others can take the advantage of the relevancy these people create. That's what makes weblogs so wonderful. Rhodes said that blogs are nothing new, they're not changing the world with their content, they're not going to make anyone huge amounts of money, but they are a form of self-expression and community which others enjoy reading. (Rodzvilla et al., 2002, p. 103)

Through the ethnographical study and a questionnaire I explored bloggers in Slovakia. I uncovered that they blog to express their feelings and to communicate with others, to share and exchange the information in never-ending discussion. People have problems they have to face. Weyman wrote that blogs are interesting for it's repercussions for how the people who use them think of themselves (Weyman, 2007).

It's a natural humans' characteristic that we have a need to talk. When I was a child we used to collect the wrapping from chewing gums with my friends. We created a clique and every time we met we talked about these wrappings from gums. We exchanged them or we share them. It is the same with blogs. People collect something what might make them more intimate to others and they share this and exchange it.

For Joe Clark a blog is a form of exteriorized psychology. He said it's a part of he, or of his psyche. While a titanium hip joint or a pacemaker might bring technology inside the corporeal he, a weblog uses technology to bring the psychological he outside of it. His weblog acts as a new limb, a new mouth, and a new hemisphere of the brain. Once those new organs come into being, he is no more equipment they augment. He added that he continue to write weblogs not for money, not for renown, not for anyone but for himself. (Rodzvilla et al., 2002, p.68)

Blogs are an unexplored element. For its unique characteristics we became people who can talk free, moreover to live more free. Maybe we will soon say "I blog, therefore I am".

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A. TABLE OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MSM   Mainstream Media

HZDS   Movement for a Democratic Slovakia

SOP   Party of Civic Understanding

SRo   The Slovak Radio

SEO   Search Engine Optimization

B. TABLE OF PICTURES

B.1. Structure of the weblog

B.2. Comments on the weblog
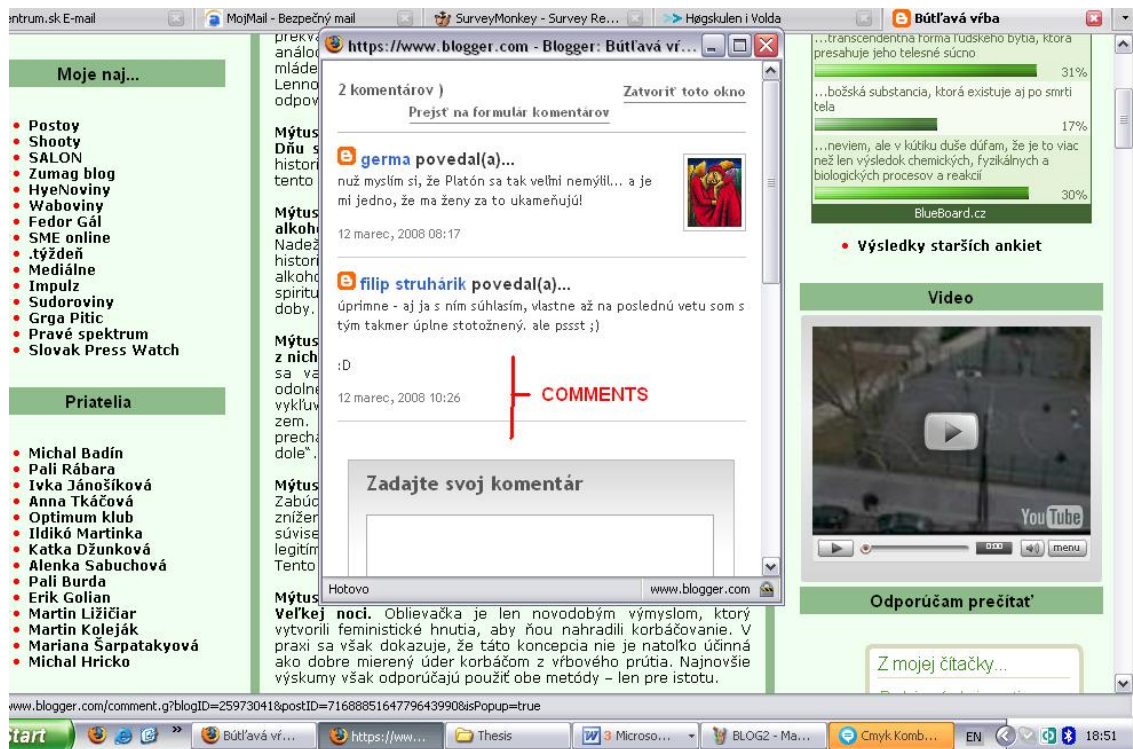
B.3. Weblogs' population in Slovakia
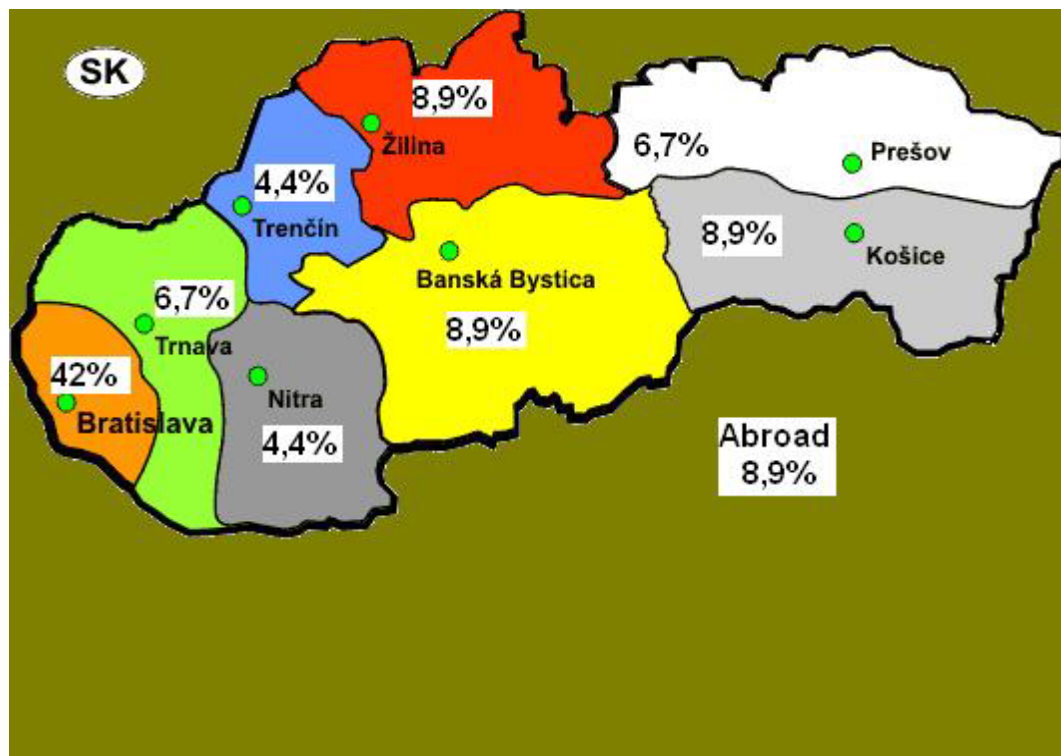
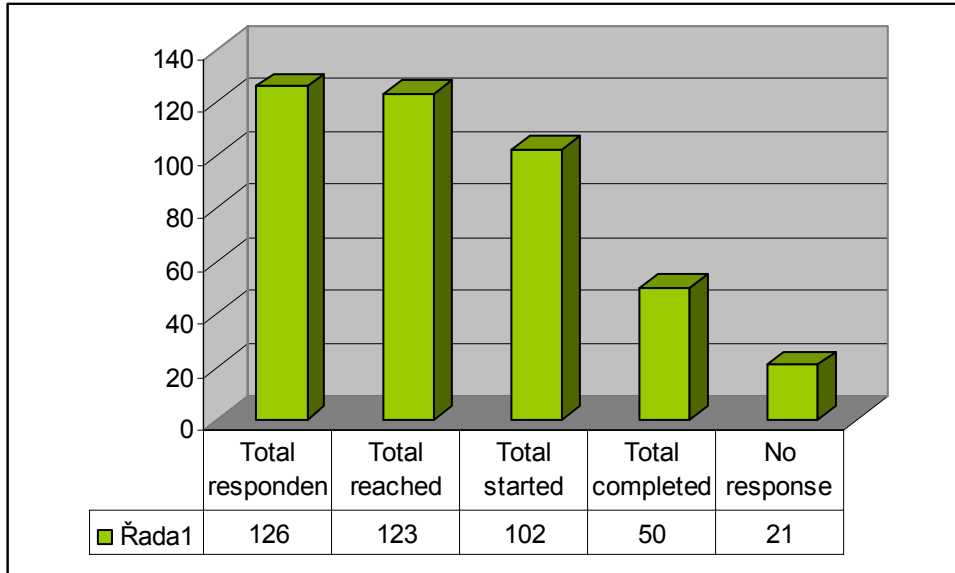## C. TABLE OF TABLES

C.1. Internet users in Slovakia (2007)

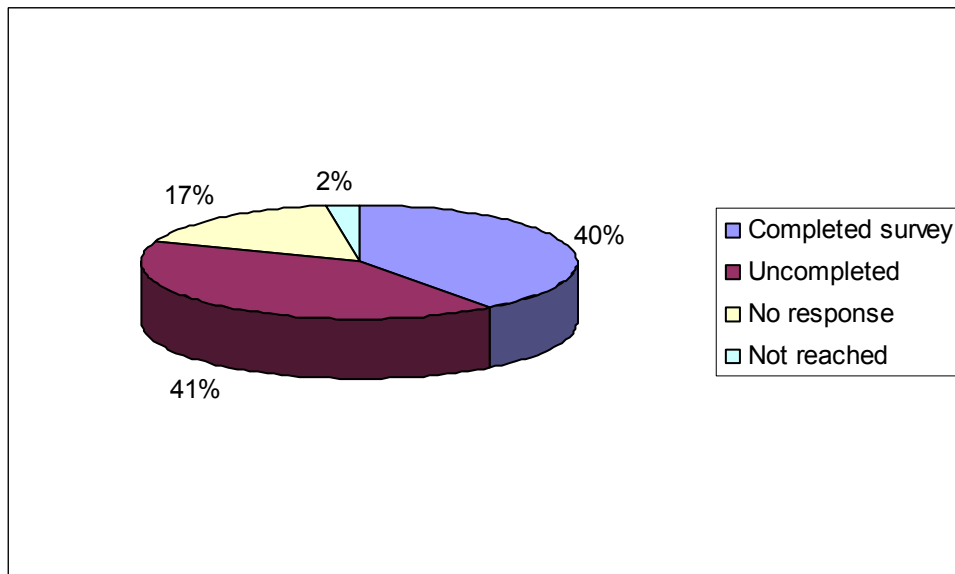| January 2007	December 2007	
Population	1 761 110	1 865 795
RU (real users)	1 620 221	1 716 531
Numer of displays	886 298 304	2 050 745 874
Numer of displays on one RU in average	547	1 195
The time spend on te Internet on one RU in average	9:43:20	12:36:42
Visits	70 905 764	89 842 388
The numer of visits on one RU in average	43,76	52,34
The numer of servers	32	46

C.2. Languages' representaion in weblogs
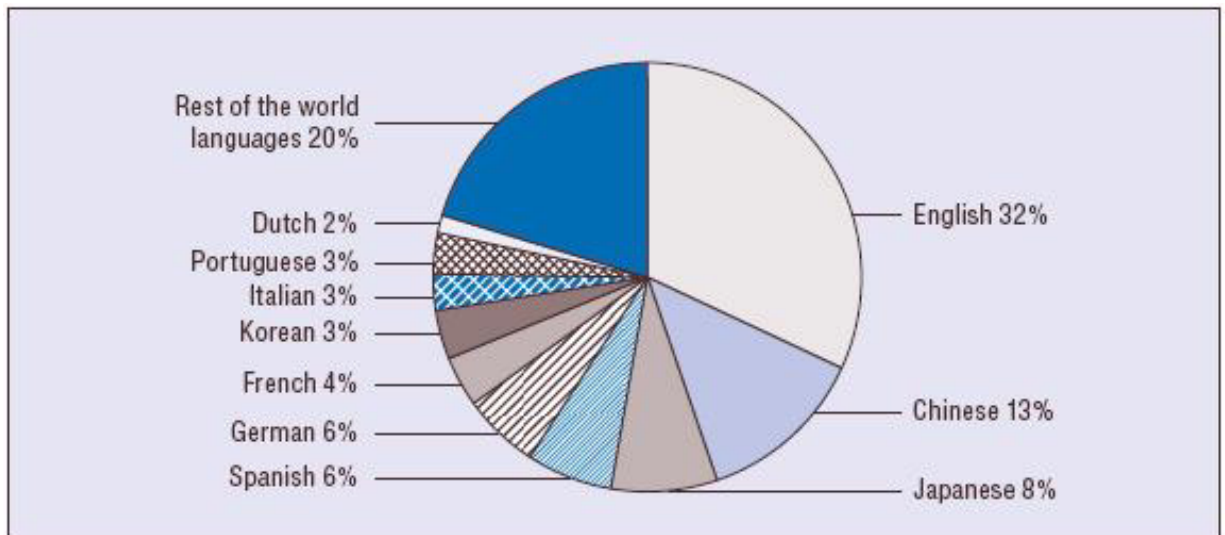
D. TABLE OF FIGURES

D.1. Number of respondents for the survey

	Total responden	Total reached	Total started	Total completed	No response
☐ Řada1	126	123	102	50	21

D.2. Percentages of the respondents for the survey

E. APPENDIX

E.1.   E-mails to the recipients

E.1.1. First type

Vazeny pan (meno)/ Vazena pani (meno),

oslovuje Vas absolventka Volda University College v Norsku.

Blogy su najnovsim medialnym fenomenom a ja sa ako jedna z prvych venujem ich skumaniu u nas, na Slovensku. Vyskum bude zahrnuty v mojej zaverecnej diplomovej praci a navyse bude predneseny na medzinarodnej konferencii o mediach - International Association for Media and Communication Research 2008, Media and Global Divides, v Stokholme.

Obraciam sa na Vas s prosbou o vyplnenie mojho dotaznika, ktory najdete na

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fRQIh9KZA4wRXBJTPL5I1w_3d_3d

Tymto dotaznikom, s Vasou pomocou, ziskame informacie, ktore este nikto nema. Preto Vas velmi pekne prosim, venujte mi svoj cas, vyplnte moj dotaznik, ktoreho vysledky budu pouzite na cisto akademicke ucely.

Blog je o prezentacii sa, o osobnosti, o nachadzani a poznani novych informaci. Tak pomozte otvaraniu sa v stale sirsich dimenziach…

Za Vas cas a empatiu vopred dakujem,

Katarina Ludrovska

E.1.2. Third type (changes are marked with red)

Mily bloger/ Mila blogerka,

oslovuje Ta buduca absolventka Volda University College v Norsku.

Blogy su najnovsim medialnym fenomenom a ja sa ako jedna z prvych venujem ich

skumaniu u nas, na Slovensku. Vyskum bude zahrnuty v mojej zaverecnej diplomovej praci

a navyse bude predneseny na medzinarodnej konferencii o mediach - International Associa-

tion for Media and Communication Research 2008, Media and Global Divides,

v Stokholme.

Obraciam sa na Teba s prosbou o vyplnenie mojho dotaznika, ktory najdes na

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fRQIh9KZA4wRXBJTPL5I1w_3d_3d

Tymto dotaznikom, s Tvojou pomocou, ziskame informacie, ktore este nikto nema. Preto

Ta velmi pekne prosim, venuj mi svoj cas, vypln moj dotaznik, ktoreho vysledky budu

pouzite na cisto akademicke ucely.

O vysledkoch vyskumu Ta samozrejme budem informovat.

Blog je o prezentacii sa, o osobnosti, o nachadzani a poznani novych informaci. Tak pomoz

otvaraniu sa v stale sirsich dimenziach…

Za Tvoj cas a empatiu Ti vopred dakujem,

Katarina Ludrovska

E.2. Questionnaire

Consent

I agree that Katarína Ludrovská may use my statement (filled questionnaire) and my weblog (a picture and content) for purposes in her research and any publications of it. My consent to the use of any information from my blog and my provided answers is entirely voluntary, and I understand that I may revoke my consent at any time. I also understand that I will be informed about the whole research process – research results, publishing aso.

I understand that my identity will remain confidential to the extent that I will not be identified by name at any time. My identity will be protected to the extent that I myself protect it on my public weblog.

_____I agree to use my statement and my weblog in this research.

Questions

1. What is your name (first and last)?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your sex?

_____Man

_____Woman

4. In which city do you live?
5. Please describe your occupation.
6. What is the URL(s) for your blog? If you have more than one, please write.
7. Do you get comments from your readers?
8. What kind of comments do you usually receive?
9. How do you feel about comments you are getting?
10. What is the reason to feel like that?
11. How long have you been blogging (in months)?
12. How long have you kept your current blog/blogs (in months)?
13. How frequently would you say do you write on your blog (weekly)?
14. How many hours do you spend with writing on your blog (weekly)?
15. What or who usually motivates you to write?

16.   When do you usually write (depends on your mood, time)?

17.   Do you think about your audience when you write?

18.   How many hours do you spend with blogging or reading others' blogs (weekly)?

19.   Does your blog have a theme? (e.g.; knitting, running, weight loss etc)?

If yes, please describe the theme:

20.   Do you write in your blog under a pseudonym?

If yes, what is it?

21.   Why do you read others blogs?

Number from seven (fit the most) till one (fit the least)

_____To seek for new information

_____ I find good quality of information

_____I want an unbiased commentaries and information about events

_____For up-to-date information

_____Blogs are truthful

_____Blogs are unique in their contents

_____For fun

_____I am spending my time

22.   What kind of information are you looking for?

23.   Does what you read on other blogs influence what you write about?

24.   Do you link to others' blogs?

25.   Do you feel like you "know" other bloggers?

26.   Would say you have a "relationship" with other bloggers?

27.   How would you characterize this "relationship"?

28.   Would you say that Slovakia has the "Slovak weblog community"?

29.   Why do you blog?

Number from nine (fit the most) till one (fit the last):

_____It is an entertaining, a fun

_____It's an escape

_____It's an addiction

_____It's a relax

_____I can change something through my postings

_____Communicating with friends and/or my family

_____Sense of community

_____Through blogging I can express my feelings

_____I blog because I communicate with others and I reach a variety of opinions

30. Why do you think people read your blog?
31. Have you a list of links in your blog (blogs you like to read)?
32. Who or what is on it?
33. What does that list of links say about?
34. Has your blog changed since you started it?
35. How has it changed (template, content or theme)?
36. Why does it change?
37. What do you like the most about blogging?
38. What are your future plans for your blog?

Acknowledgement

Thank you very much that you have found the time to fill out my questionnaire. Each from the information you wrote will contribute for the research.

Since no one has ever realized this kind of research in Slovakia yet, you might help to make Slovakia more visible in the Europe. However, I believe this research will have huge impact mostly on us: Slovak citizens, bloggers, students, teachers, scholars…

I appreciate your interest and I value your responses very high. I believe you have contributed to the unique work.

THANK YOU!