

Empirical Analysis of Turkish Web-logs

Prepared by

Erol IŐIK
erolisik@gmail.com

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Abstract

Weblogs – web pages that frequently modified with dated entries which are ordered in reverse chronological order – are latest form of online communication to gain widespread popularity. This paper presents the results of a quantitative content analysis of 81 randomly-selected weblogs of Turkish blog authors. Empirically observable features compared within the study sample and the previous study concerning blog authors located United States. Based on the profile generated by the empirical analysis, common and differentiating characteristics of Turkish blogs considered in terms of blog author characteristics, temporal measures concerning blog entries and structural characteristics of blogs.

Introduction

Weblogs are web pages that frequently modified with dated entries which are ordered in reverse chronological order. They usually published with the help of an authoring tool and have sidebars with profile information and monthly categorized entry archives. They tend to be highly personal and typically read by repeat visitors interlinked in a network (Kumar, 2004). These networks formed by blog authors, also called bloggers, bring a form of social software like bulletin board, instant messaging, online role-playing games (Tepper, 2003). It is also stated by Tepper (2003) that blog publishing is gaining notice by the larger players that has been around in one form or another since the Web itself. However, Weblogs are distinct form other social software such as e-zines, which were published on a schedule, like paper periodicals, and contained longer original articles and artwork. E-zines required planning, organization, and a certain level of skill in layout, typography, and the other elements of Web design. By contrast, Weblogs were rudimentary in design and content (Blood, 2004).

In spite of being highly personal, interlinked networks makes blogging the latest form of online communication to gain widespread popularity (Schiano, 2004). Current estimates worldwide place number of sites calling themselves "blogs" at over 2.3 million of which 1.5 million are actively maintained ⁽¹⁾. Prior blog hosts were outside of Turkey so it is not possible to estimate exact number of Turkish blogs hosted in those hosts together with Turkish blog hosts such as Blogcu (<http://www.blogcu.com>) and gaxii (<http://www.gaxii.com>). However, Turkish blogger community BlogKardesligi lists almost 50.000 ⁽²⁾ weblogs created and maintained by Turkish bloggers.

The most-studied web genre thus far, however, has been the personal home page. Herring (2005) cite personal home pages as an example of an "emergent" web genre, i.e., one that did not exist prior to the creation of the web. Personal homepages are typically created and maintained by a single individual, and their content tends to focus on the creator or his/her interests. Similar to that definition Schiano (2004) defines blogging as a form of personal expression and communication which is surprisingly versatile medium, with uses similar to

an online diary, personal chronicle or newsletter. However, Nardi (2004) stated that bloggers see homepages as more static than blogs and they emphasized that they blogged to comment on topics they found important. Blogging provided an outlet for expressing a point of view on topics the authors considered much more. Moreover, the study conducted by Nardi (2004) showed that most bloggers are currently aware of their readers, even in confessional blogs, calibrating what they should and should not reveal. Many bloggers have personal codes of ethics dictating what goes into their blogs.

The history of blogging does not dates back that blogging in its current form began around 1997, with Dave Winer's Scripting News, an online record of Winer's reflections on a wide range of topics. They vary widely in nature and content, but as they have grown in popularity they have been increasingly portrayed as online diaries or personal journals, often of the most confessional sort (Nardi 2004). In late 1999, several companies released software designed to automate Weblog publication. However, for Turkish blog authors, establishment of a free blog host with Turkish interface dates to April 2005.

Study Description

Data

The present study is passed on an analysis of random sample of 81 blogs collected through December 2005 using randomizing feature blog community-tracking site blogkardesligi.com. The BlogKardesligi site was selected as the data source because it has the largest numbers as a community of Turkish bloggers, which has 1189⁽²⁾ registered members. Moreover BlogKardesligi website tracks approximately 50.000⁽²⁾ blogs and supports the largest Turkish blog host called blogcu (<http://www.blogcu.com>).

The second reason for using a blog Blog Kardesligi community was to make sure the widest distribution of blogger profile possible since that early-bloggers of blogging community were using some free blog hosts located outside Turkey. Those free blog hosts were originally had English interface so that early-bloggers were people who were able to speak English. Later,

blog hosts with Turkish interface established and Turkish bloggers who do not know English also started to publish weblogs. This BlogKardesligi community exists for long time enough to cover those early-bloggers and new comers.

Methodology

Contents of the weblogs analyzed in order to find out structural and functional properties of weblogs of Turkish bloggers. Consistent with the empirical study Herring (2005) conducted, coding categories used for collecting empirical data in multiple aspects.

First, characteristics of the blog authors (Herring, 2005) investigated in terms of number of authors, gender, age and the personal information located on the first page. Concern of this investigation was to determine the amount of information about blog authors available on blogs themselves and draw the profile of Turkish bloggers. The similarities and differences considered in terms of the amount or type of information between Turkish bloggers and the bloggers in US who studied in previous studies.

Temporal measures about recency, age of blog and the interval between two sequential entries coded. The recency of the blog determined according to the time interval between the dates of the most recent entry in the blog and the investigation date. Similarly, interval between two sequential entries determined as the interval between the date of the most current entry and the next -most current entry. The age of the blog was determined according to the date of the oldest entry.

The structural features except than the reverse-chronological entries help to identify a web page as blog such as calendar or archives. These structural features identified in previous content analytic research such as number of links, images, presence of search feature and advertisements (Herring, 2005). The following coding categories used that type of blogging software used, the ability to post comments to entries, and presence of calendar, archives and badges, which were identified in Herring's (2005) study of weblogs according to grounded approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, cited in Herring, 2005).

Links existed in weblogs are also taken into consideration to determine characteristics of blogs and community relationships between bloggers. These characteristics expressed in previous studies as frequency of links, links to other blogs and news sources, numbers of actual comments on entries, and message length(Herring, 2005).

Totally 55 features determined at Herring's study used to code 81 blogs. The purpose of coding same features with the Herring's study was to collect comparable data with the previous study made for bloggers in US and determine differences with Turkish bloggers. The bogs were selected from the members of the Turkish blog community BlogKardesligi randomly.

Results

In these section quantitative results of coding made on 81 blogs in the sample presented. In the following discussion the results quantitatively compared with the previous studies and differences would be drawn.

Blog author characteristics

The characteristics of blog authors resemble the user characteristics of genre analysis of bloggers (Herring, 2005) in the data obtained form blogs' first page or bloggers' profile information pages that 37.2 percent of the bloggers were males. However, considerable of Turkish bloggers (36.2%) did not give any gender information in their blogs' first page or profile pages. Moreover, the authors did not provide considerable information about their real-life identities. The main characteristics of the blog authors in the sample are summarized in Table 1.

Table1. Blog author characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
One author	63	77.8
Male	38	37.2
Female	27	26.5
Adult (20 years or older)	46	45
No age information	50	49
Student	10	
Name on first page (other than pseudonym)	23	28,4
Other personal information on first page	50	61.7
Graphical representation on first page	22	27.2

The majority of blogs (77.8%) in the sample were single authored that is created and maintained by a single individual. Age of the author could be determined in 51% of the blogs and 45% of this were adults (20 years and older). Although blog author did not provide considerable information about their real-life identities, student was the most frequent occupation at frequency of 10. Another issue related with the real-life identities of blog authors was their name and graphical representations. A majority (74%) provide a name as pseudo name (45.6%), a first name (11.1%) or as full name (17.3%). The usage of graphical representation, however, fairly low (27.2%) both in the first page of the blog and the other pages reached through profile links. Moreover, those used graphical representation used iconic representations or avatars other than authors' personal photos.

Temporal Measures

The blogs in the present sample vary in update frequency and the most recent update prior to collection. Blogs' update recency did not used as sampling criteria since the data collected from the sample showed that interval between two sequential updates had a range of 0 to 132 days which in very close to the range of recency of update at time of data collection that 0 to 131 days.

Table 2. Temporal Measures

Measure	Mean (days)	Range (days)
Interval Between two sequential updates	8	0-132
Recency of update at time of data collection	20	0-131
Age of Blog	179	6-1124

The update frequency determined from the interval between the most recent and the next most recent entries which was 8 days for the sample as a whole. Although this method requires minimum of two entries, the blogs with less than 5 entries did not represented in the sample since most of the blog software initially comes with an entry called “hello world” as a first entry which had not posted by the actual blog author. As a result of this criteria in the sampling, the age range of the blogs in the sample wearied form 6 days to 1124 days. The average blog age of the sample was 179 days (almost six moths). The overwhelmingly majority of blogs (92.6%) had their first entry in a year of 2005 in this sample. Monthly distribution of the blogs’ first entry dates represented in Chart 1.

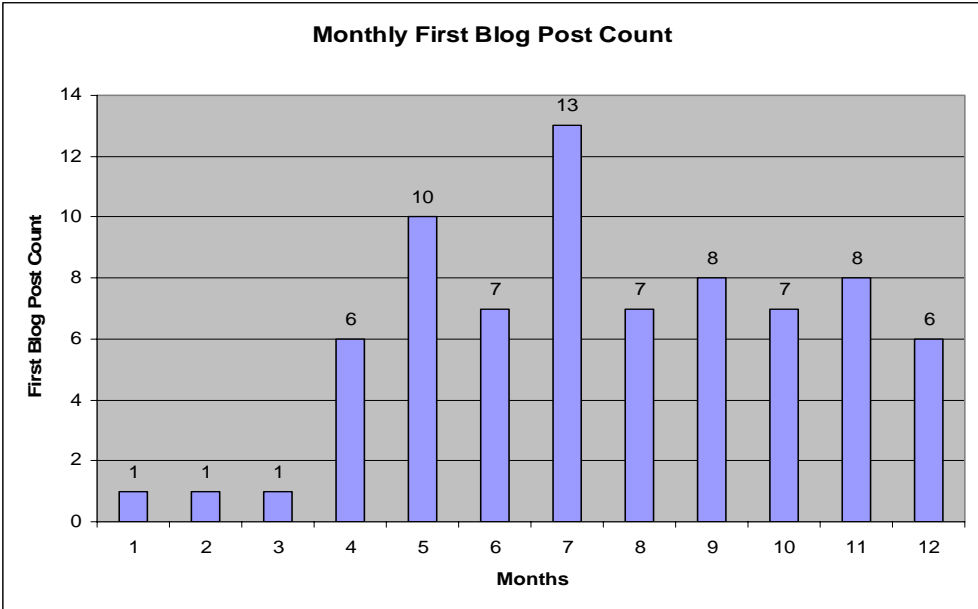


Chart 1: Monthly distribution of first posts of blogs in the sample

Structural characteristics

In this section, the results for the coding of structural characteristics are presented for two units of analysis: the blog home page (first page of each site) as a whole, and the most recent entry in each blog.

Home Page

Weblogs share some structural features typically such as sidebars, archives (links in the sidebars to older entries) and badges by their examples (Herring, 2005). In accordance with this definition archives were the most frequent (95%) structural feature and it is followed by badges (80.2%). Table 3 lists the frequencies of these structural features as coded for the home page of each blog.

Table 3. Structural features

Feature	Frequency	Percentage
Archives	77	95.0
Badges	65	80.2
Images	76	93.8
Comments on entries allowed	75	91.3
Search function	19	23.5
Calendar	11	13.6

Although blog authors had the opportunity of changing the presence of the above features, it is observed that most of the blogs sticks to the features blog software provided. Thus the presence or absence of the above features is determined by the blog creation software used by the author. Additionally, the most common blog features through the samples presented here, which were Blogger and Blogcu, had the archive feature by default, and at least one badge which presents the blog software logo or name. Most of the bloggers Table 4 shows the brand of the software used to create the blog. Blogger (also known as blogger) is the most common blogging software in spite of its English interface. Blogcu, which has a Turkish interface, is the second common blogging software and it is followed by Wordpress which also has a Turkish interface and support group⁽³⁾.

Table 4. Blog software used

Software name	Frequency	Percentage
Blogger	43	53.0
Blogcu	16	19.8
Wordpress	11	13.6
Others	5	6.2
Unknown	6	7.4

Another part of the study considered the linking from the homepage of the blogs. Most of the links presented in the sidebars of the blogs, linking to the websites by others (72.8%). The next common link category is the other blogs (70.3%). Links to news sites and links to webrings has the same frequency (56) and presented in the weblogs as 69.1%. Table 5 lists the frequencies of these link categories for each blog.

Table 5. Links from home page

Destination	Frequency	Percentage
To websites by others	59	72.8
To other blogs	57	70.3
To news sites	56	69.1
To webrings	56	69.1
To websites created by or about self	19	23.4

Most recent entry

Weblogs consist of entries or posts which is “frequently updated content” that readers visit the site on a regular basis to read (Herring, 2005). From this entries, the most recent ones for each blog coded in the study sample. The results grouped for entry headers, entry footers and the entry body features and listed in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6. Entry header and footer

Information Contained	Frequency	Percentage
Header		
Title	81	100
Date	63	79.0
Time	5	6.1
Author’s name	5	6.1
Average number of header features per blog	2.0	
Footer		
Comments	72	88.9
Author’s name	43	53.0
Time	42	51.9
Date	19	23.5
Internal links	5	4.9
Average number of footer features per blog	2.2	

Table 7 covers the information contained in the header and the footer of the entry. The amount of information placed on the header and the footer of the entry depends mostly on the blog software. However, the theme features of blog software causes those information to change place that within same blog software some with some theme date information placed on the entry header but for other theme it is placed on the footer. Moreover blog authors could change the visibility of the information in entry header and footer through some options blog software provided or help of some support groups like BloggerHacks ⁽⁴⁾. In spite of these customization opportunities all the blog entries have titles in entry header (100%), and majority of them have comments at footer (88.9%). The second common information located at entry footer is Authors' name (53%). Date information is also common in entry headers (79%) but time information mostly placed at footer (51.6%).

The blog entry headers and footers have multiple types information at the same time that average number of header features per blog is 2.0 and the average number of footer features per blog is 2.2. Most frequent information contained in header is the title and the date of the entry. On the other hand, most common information contained in footer is the links to comments, author name and the entry time.

Table 7. Entry comment features

Feature	Frequency	Mean	Range
Number of the comments for most recent entry on homepage	82	1.0	0 – 7
Number of Author comments	11	0.1	0 – 3
Number of unique commenters	75	1.0	0 – 7
Number of the comments for oldest entry on homepage	143	1.9	0 – 13
Number of Author comments	23	0.3	0 – 3
Number of unique commenters	118	1.6	0 – 11

For table 7, the blogs which does not allow readers to post comments excluded. The mean number of comments per entries for most recent entries is 1.0 and the maximum number of

comments is 7. As expected the number of comments per entries for the oldest entries of the pages increases as a mean of 1.9 comments per entry and 0 to 13 entries range.

The final set of measures includes measurements about the body texts of the entries. The average number of words for entries is 149.3 and ranges for 0 to 997. Those entry bodies also includes number of images and links which could be grouped as links to websites by others (22.2%), to other blogs (4.9%)I to internal blog (4.9%) and to news sites (3.7%), like the links in sidebars. However there are no links to websites created by or about the blog author self in entry bodies. Table 8 lists the frequencies of these link categories for body text of entries.

Table 8. Entry body features

Feature	Frequency	Percentage
Images	57	70.4
Links		
To websites by others	18	22.2
To other blogs	4	4.9
To internal blog	4	4.9
To news sites	3	3.7
To websites created by or about self	0	0
Number of links per entry	Mean : 0.9	Range: 0 – 9
Number of words per entry	Mean : 149.3	Range: 0 – 997

Summary of Results

This section has presented a quantitative characterization of the blogs on a sample of randomly selected Turkish-language blogs. This sample could not cover all the variants of blogs but provides information about major factors and tendencies about blogging that various blogging software used to produce frequently updated content and most of those entries had comments from blog readers. Most of the blog authors do not give information about their real-life identities and they used few links in entries. Table 9 summarizes characteristics shared by the majority of the blogs in sample.

Table 9. Common characteristics of blogs in sample

Characteristic	Percent of blogs
Single- authored	77.8
Archives	95.0
Badges	80.2
Links to websites by others at sidebar	72.8
Uses Blogger software	53.0
<hr/>	
More than one comment per entry	
Updated frequently	
Few links in entries	
Little information about authors' real-life identities.	

Discussion

Common characteristics of blogs inspected in this study determined as mostly single authored web pages that contains archives, badges, and links to websites by others at sidebar and majority of them uses blogger software. Those results have some aspects common and some different with previous study held by Herring which had a sample of US bloggers.

Author characteristics of Turkish bloggers showed that most of the blogs in the sample single authored (77.9%). However, when compared with the results of the Herring's (2005) study, which was determined single authored weblogs as 90.8%, the results for Turkish blogs considerably lower. One reason for this difference could be the community behavior of Turkish bloggers that owners of the blogs give permissions to close-friend bloggers a right to publish entries in their weblogs. Similar results had obtained from the structural features of the Turkish blogs that the comments on entries allowed 91.3%, which is more that double of the US bloggers' (43%).

Nardi (2004) claims the blogger can broadcast messages of their own choosing, without interruption Limited feedback is possible with comments on blog entries. The results of Herring's study also support this claim that comments per entry had a mean of 0.3. On the other hand, the mean of comments per entry for Turkish blogs is 1.9. Thought the

measurements of the most recent entry and the oldest entry on the page it is observed that commenter of the recent one also commented the oldest one which supports the idea of blogging to be social activity.

Representation of personal information or real life identity in Turkish blogs is another issue worth to consider. Data collected about blog author characteristics showed that 36.3 of the authors do not provide gender information. Use of pseudo name is another issue that only 28.4% of blog authors in the sample use name other than pseudo name on the first page of the blog. In the Herring's study with bloggers in US shows that 67.6 blog authors use name other than pseudo name, which is more than twice of Turkish bloggers'. The use of graphical representation on first page ratio also very low (27.2%) and as observed most of the graphical representations of the authors consists of iconic images and avatars other than real photos of authors. When these results considered together it is possible to conclude that Turkish blog authors tend to hide their real-life identities on their blogs.

Temporal measures quite vary from the findings of Herring's (2005) study. The interval between two sequential updates for Turkish bloggers is 8 days mean, however, for US bloggers 2.2 days (Herring, 2005). Also interval between two sequential updates is shorter for US blogger (5.0 days) than Turkish bloggers (8.0 days). Personal journal blogs are claimed as equally or more frequent than other blog types in Herring's study. The single-authored blogs is less in Turkish sample (77.9%) than US sample (90.8%). That difference points less personal journal blogs which could be the reason for longer intervals in sequential updates. Average age of blogs in the sample measured as 179 days which is close to the previous study, by Herring's which is measured as 163 days for US bloggers.

Structural features of weblogs in the sample of Turkish bloggers seem consistent such as 95.0% have archives and 80.2% have badges. These two features actually initial properties of most frequent blog software Blogger and Blogcu used by Turkish bloggers. For US bloggers archives used 73.5% and badges used 69.0 percent (Herring, 2005). This difference possibly caused from that the variance in the blog software used in US blogs greater than of that used by Turkish bloggers.

In terms of entry body features the greatest difference between Turkish bloggers and US bloggers in Herring's (2005) study is the use of images in entries that for Turkish blog sample 70.4% of the entries contained images, however the results for other study showed only 9.2%. However the usages of links do not differ much that links to websites by others for Turkish blogs 22.2 and in Herring's study 27.7. The data in Herring's study collected March through May of 2003 but for this study data collected through December 2005. This time gap could cause the difference in the image usage due to enhanced opportunities of image hosting capabilities of blog hosts.

Conclusion and Further Study

In this study, Turkish weblog genre characterized empirically and compared with previous research concerning characterization of the weblog genre of US. In the estimated characteristics of bloggers previous study revealed most of the blogs individualistic, even intimate, forms of self-expression, and a surprising number of them contain few or no links. Based on the profile generated by the empirical analysis, Turkish blogs estimated as less individualistic in terms of the multiple-authored blogs in the sample, and the number of comments per entry. However, Turkish blog authors seemed more conservative giving information about their real-life identities. Temporal measures showed that the frequency of entries of Turkish blogs is less than that of US ones. Finally no considerable difference estimated in terms of structural features of blogs.

This study intended as an application of systematic approach of weblog analysis and description on Turkish weblogs. Comparisons of the empirical data collected points some differences in author characteristics of Turkish blogs. Those characteristics could be drawn and motivations of Turkish blog authors for blogging could be investigated as a further study.

Notes

- ¹ At the time of our data collection in December 2005 the number of blogs tracked by the NITLÉ Blog Census site (<http://www.blogcensus.net/>).
- ² At the time of our data collection in December 2005 the number of blogs tracked by the Turkish blogger community BlogKardesligi (<http://blogkardesligi.com>)
- ³ Wordpress, open source blog software Turkish support site (<http://www.wordpress-tr.com>)
- ⁴ Community blog which contains tips and ready to use codes for blogspot users (<http://bloggerhacks.blogspot.com>)

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Appendix I: Coding categories

Overall identification:

- A Blog #
Assigned sequentially to random blogs as they are retrieved from blo.gs
- B Acquisition Date
Date the blog was retrieved for coding
- C Acquisition Time
Time the blog was retrieved for coding
- D URL of blog homepage
(Give URL)
- E Title in header (include all plausibly-related text, even if in blog software logo)
None (0); give title and any associated description
- F Title in title tag
None (0); give title and any associated description
- G Title in URL (excluding personal names and domain names of other web sites)
None (0); give title and any associated description
- H Title elsewhere on first page
None (0); give title and any associated description

Blog author(s):

- I Blogger's name (from first page only)
None (0); pseudonym (1); first name (or transparently derived nickname) (2); full name (3); other (4); first name + initial (5); initial + last name (6)
- J Blogger's name - location (code all that apply)
No name visible from first page (0); in header (1); in title tag (2); in URL (3); in sidebar (4); in entry header or footer (5); in body of entry (6); other (7)
- K Number of blog authors
(Give number)

Code L-Q separately for each blog author:

- L Gender (from any available source)
Unknown (0); male (1); female (2)
- M Age (from any available source)
Unknown (0); adult (1); teen (aged 13-19) (2); child (3)
- N Occupation (from any available source)
Unknown (0); other (describe)
- O Geographical location (from any available source)
Unknown (0); other (give country)
- P Personal information about blogger (including explicit indication of gender, age, occupation, location, etc.)
None (0); on first page (1); one click away from first page (2); elsewhere (3)
- Q Graphic representation of blogger
None (0); on first page (1); one click away from first page (2); elsewhere (3)

History and activity level of blog:

- R Date of current entry (at time of sampling)
- S Time of current entry
- T Date of next-most-current entry (at time of sampling)
- U Time of next-most-current entry
- V Date of oldest entry in blog
- W Time of oldest entry in blog

Technical features:

- X Blog software
Unknown (0); other (give software name)
- Y Comments on entries
Not allowed (0); allowed (1)
- Z Search (on 1st page)
No (0); yes (1)
- AA Calendar (on 1st page)
No (0); yes (1)
- AB Archives (text and/or date links outside calendar; on 1st page)
No (0); yes (1)
- AC Links to CMC (on 1st page; code all that apply)
None (0); email address (1); guest book (2); mailing list (3); other (4)

Overall content:

- AD Blog type (based on predominant content from entries on first page)
Unknown (0); personal journal (1); filter (2); k-log (3); mixed (4); other (5)
- AE Genuineness of presentation (is the site what it appears to be?)
Unknown (0); genuine, including humor sites presented straightforwardly as such (1); non genuine, including satire, irony, or deceptively-presented sites (2)

For AF-AI, code all that apply:

- AF Ads
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other
- AG Images (non-background)
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)
- AH Badges
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)
- AI Links to webrings (i.e., to homepage of webrings or to a list of thematically-related links, excluding generic themes such as 'friends')
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)

For AJ-AM, code only for direct links, chosen by the blogger:

- AJ Links to other blogs
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)
- AK Links to non-blog content: news sources
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)
- AL Links to non-blog content: other web sites created by the blogger
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)
- AM Links to non-blog content: other web sites created by others
None on first page (0); in header (1); in sidebar (2); in footer (3); in entries (4); other (5)

First entry:

- AN Entry header (code all that apply)
None (0); title of entry (1); blogger name (2); date (3); time (4); internal links (other than comments, but including permalinks) (5); external links (6); comments (7); other (8)
- AO Entry footer (code all that apply)
None (0); title of entry (1); blogger name (2); date (3); time (4); internal links (other than comments, but including permalinks) (5); external links (6); comments (7); other (8)
- AP Number of words in entry body (including quotes, etc.)
(Give number)
- AQ Number of sentences or sentence fragments in entry body (including quotes, etc.)
(Give number)
- AR Number of paragraphs in entry body (including quotes, etc.)
(Give number)
- AS Number of words in quotations (count all and only true quotations, regardless of whether in quotation marks)
(Give number)
- AT Number of sentences or sentence fragments in quotations
(Give number)
- AU Images in entry body
(Give number)
- AV Links in entry body (put in by blogger)
(Give number)
- AW Links - type (code all that apply)
None (0); to other blogs (1); to news sources (2); to other web sites created by blogger (3); to other web sites created by others (4); internal to blog (5)

Comments:

- AX Most recent entry: number of comments
None (0); one or more (give number)
- AY Most recent entry: number of unique commenters

- None (0); one or more (give number)
- AZ Most recent entry: number of comments by blogger
None (0); one or more (give number)
- BA Oldest entry on page: number of comments
None (0); one or more (give number)
- BB Oldest entry on page: number of unique commenters
None (0); one or more (give number)
- BC Oldest entry on page: number of comments by blogger
None (0); one or more (give number)
- BD Other remarks: