

**Writing Style Impact in the Success of Knowledge Sharing
Through Blog**

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the
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(Business Information System)

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

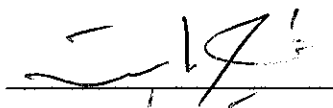
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Approved by,



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UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI PETRONAS

TRONOH, PERAK

January 2009

CERTIFICATION OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this project, that the original work is my own except as specified in the references and acknowledgements, and that the original work contained herein have not been undertaken or done by unspecified sources or persons.



NOR HUDA BT MAZAN

ABSTRACT

Weblogs, or blogs, have been a significant new development in recent years. The emergence of corporate and academic blogs are great effort for knowledge sharing. But how success these blog in attracting users to read through the blog posts in promoting sharing of knowledge? This project aims at investigating the role of writing style factors in the success of knowledge sharing through blog. The project also aims to promote knowledge sharing culture people by providing them with a blog as a medium for communication and knowledge transfer. The first part of the paper deals with hypothesis that will be developed and this hypothesis will be proved by creating two way of writing style which is formal and non formal. The second part shows the results of the analysis on user participation to these kind of writing style that allows us to better understand the role of writing style. The conclusions of this study are based on interpreting the hypothesis that have been proven by the analysis. The research findings indicate that non-formal writing style positively related to user participation through blog.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Of Study

Nowadays people obtain lots of information through surfing the internet besides through other materials such as newspaper and magazines. The emergence of various social network such as Facebook, Friendster and Blog plays important roles in knowledge sharing among internet users. Furthermore we can find communities which share the same interests with us to share and get the knowledge by using these kind of social networks. Among these, blogging is becoming a great tool and has become trend nowadays. Blogging has been a popular public activity for several years, and has attracted many users from different background of study and life style. Two blogs are allegedly created every second in the world (Technorati, www.technorati.com). According to the same source, between December 2004 and December 2006, the number of blogs in the world rose from 5.4 million to 63.1 million. Thus, the “blogosphere” saw its size multiplied by 11 in 2 years.

Moyes (2006) noted that according to New Research from Microsoft MSN portal, about 46% or nearly half of those online in Asia have a blog, 41% spend more than three hours a week blogging and 50% believe blog content to be as trustworthy as traditional media. This study was conducted online, covering its seven markets in Asia, namely Hong Kong, India, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. The sample size was over 25000. Some key findings on this research is over 74% of bloggers in Malaysia are below 25 years old.

This study reflects the blogosphere or blog trend in Malaysia. It showed that blogging is a social phenomenon as a means to maintain and build their social connections and to express themselves. It also reflects that people nowadays see blog as a user-friendly tools rather than other service such as forum and so on.

However, how success the blog o contribute in knowledge sharing is the question that needs to be analyzed. The number of blog created does not really matter if the blog itself fail to attract many users to participate or interact through it. It is because blog's success is partially dependent on the readers' loyalties to it. The number of readers who give comments also show a good indicator of the successful blog.

There are some factors that contribute to the popularity of blog such as the visual and audio content but for this project the focus is on the writing style. For this project, it becomes one of the main objectives to develop a social networking which is blog. The main target reader for this blog is for Universiti Teknologi Petronas student itself and Malaysian for general readers.

1.2 Problem Statement

A high level of participation was a prerequisite to the blog's success. It shows the number of people did share the knowledge through it. There are million of blogs has been created but not many of them attract many user to participate into that. Why? There are some factors that contribute to the popularity of blog but for this project the focus is on the writing and style chosen. Did writing style through blog affect user intentions to participate and share information or knowledge?

There are also many corporate blog has emerged such as Google Blog (<http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>), HP Blog (<http://www.communities.hp.com/>), Agilent (<http://nano.tm.agilent.com/blog/>) and etc. Besides, the academic blog also growing exponentially such as Harvard University Blog (<http://harvardpress.typepad.com/>), Nursing Board Exam Blog (<http://philippinesnursingboardexamsanswerkey.blogspot.com/>), IE Student Blog (<http://ie-student.blogspot.com/>), and so on. These blog purposely develop by the author to exchange information to their customer and readers. It is great effort in promoting knowledge sharing but the question is how success these blog in attracting users to read through the blog posts? How many comments do they received? There are some factors that contribute to this situation and one of them is the way the

author write the blog entries. The factor of formal and non-formal writing style do affect user participation to the blog entries.

1.2.2 Significant of the Project

The research project can greatly encourage and guide people on using the right writing style in blog as one of the way to promote knowledge sharing. The blog that has been developed actually creating a 'conducive' environment or platform for people to share with the hope of increase in knowledge behaviour among people. By proposing the hypothesis whether there is a difference on user participation by using formal or non-formal writing style are actually provides additional value to bloggers (personal or corporate blog)

1.3 Objectives and Scope of Study

1.3.1 Objectives

- 1) To develop a blog.

- 2) To proof writing style impact on user participation through blog.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Networks

2.1.1 Definition of Social Network

“Social networks are a social structure of nodes that represent individuals (or organizations) and the relationship between them within a certain domain. Therefore, social networks are usually built based on the strength of relationships and trust between members” (Liccardi et al., 2004).

Phillips (1996, p. 4) point out that a social network can be defined as a group of social actors that interrelate or exchange information with one another. The study of a social network that exchanges information between and among its members provides interesting insights into how knowledge is spread throughout a community

Social networks such as *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Blog* are useful and beneficial when finding people on the Internet with whom you are likely to have interesting and useful conversations. To make sure that people can represent their identity and to allow people with mutual or same interests to find each other, social networking systems have been created.

2.1.2 Social Network and Knowledge Sharing

A recent study (Matthys et al., 2006) state that passive knowledge sharing should be complemented with interactive knowledge sharing approaches and that the social networking paradigm is well suited to allow this.

Another element that suggested by the same author for social network in contribution to knowledge sharing is the group space contains tools, which allow knowledge sharing between multiple people. This space constitutes the overlap between the areas of knowledge management, social networking systems and community informatics. In most systems, the tools, which are available in the group space, are limited to a forum on which members can post and read messages. There is still much room for improvement in the group space, as it exists in current social networking systems, in order to better support knowledge sharing between multiple people.

The idea of social networking within the corporate frame is about knowledge sharing and knowledge management. (Razbaeva 2007)

2.13 Social Network: Blog as a great tool

Social networking is become a trend and important nowadays. The emergence of corporate Blogs creates new opportunity for companies to interact with customers as one of the advantage. Some reasons for choosing blog as a tool for this project is the user involvement through blogging.

Corporate Blogging fundamentally enables atwo-way communication between an organization and its customers. Through Blogs, it is much easier for a company to seek opinions, participations, and knowledge from its consumers. In fact, the challenge for most companies is not how to obtain feedback; but how to best deal with the feedback (Chen, Liu & Hu, p.6153)

A blog (derived from web log) is an online journal that contains news and views on a particular subject or acts as the owner's personal diary. Most blogs give readers the ability to comment and discuss the issues raised by the owner. (Payne 2008)

Razbaeva (2007) stated that on the business side many companies also started to recognize the benefits that social networking can bring to the workplace e.g. blogs or wikis. It encourages collaboration and efficiency both internally between co-workers and externally with customers and partners.(<http://blog.isn.ch/>)

For an instance, GM has adopted FastLane Blog (<http://fastlane.gmBlogs.com/>) to spread news, provide information, and create an online community where its customers can exchange information and discuss what is important to them. Another example, Microsoft developers and product managers are talking directly to customers daily via Blogs to understand how customers respond to Microsoft products and services. There are also thousand of company nowadays are using blog to communicate and share the knowledge with their customer.

2.2 Blog Writing Style

2.1.1 Definition of Writing Style

A blog is a web site, where anybody can write about his or her own personal experiences and thoughts on a voluntary basis. As a result, it reflects user's personality and cultural biases, sometimes user will attract to the blog because of the way the writers express the ideas.

Writing style is the manner in which a writer addresses a matter in prose. A style reveals the writer's personality or 'voice.' It is the result of the choices the writer makes in syntactical structures, diction, and figures of thought. Similar questions of style exist in the choice of spoken language. (www.wikipedia.com)

Literary style is defined as the characteristic manner in which an author expresses him- or her-self. The single most important thing to note about great writers is that their style is unique, different and idiosyncratic. (Brown, 2009, pp. 75)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Project Methodology : SMARTVision Knowledge Management

Methodology

Developing a KM methodology is a critical step to conduct KM activities or projects. Rebeck (2001) present SMARTVision Knowledge Management methodology that can be implemented in any KM activities. Figure 2 shows a high-level view of the method, and Table I lists the specific phases, procedures and outputs for the methodology.

The SMARTVision knowledge management methodology

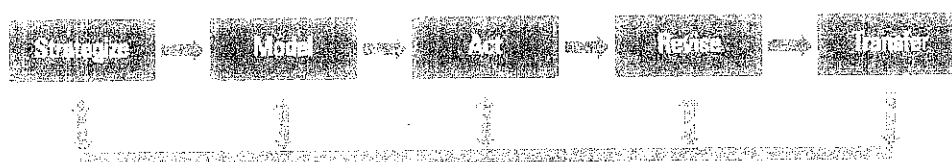


Figure 1: SMARTVision Knowledge Management Methodology

This methodology addresses the entire KM process and give details on how to actually performing KM activities or projects. The methodology is cyclic, with multiple feedback loops. The cyclic, iterative of the methodology is illustrated by the looping in Figure 2.

The diagram in Figure 2 is detailed in Table I. Specific procedure are given for each general KM phase. The outputs provide direction regarding what should actually be completed during each phase.

Table I : Details of SMARTVision Methodology

Phase	Procedure(s)	Subprocedure(s)	Outputs
Strategize	1. Perform strategic planning	(a) Determine key knowledge requirements (i.e. core competencies) (b) Set knowledge-management priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business needs analysis document: this reviews the current IT infrastructure and documents the metrics to be used for measuring success of the knowledge-management procedure Cultural assessment and incentives document: this reviews the current culture of the organization and outlines approaches for encouraging knowledge sharing within the organization
	2. Perform business needs analysis	(a) ID business problem(s) (b) Establish metrics for success	
	3. Conduct cultural assessment and establish a motivation and reward structure to encourage knowledge sharing		
Model	1. Performance conceptual modelling	(a) Conduct a knowledge audit <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify types and sources of knowledge (i.e. knowledge assets) Determine competencies and weaknesses Perform knowledge mapping to identify the organization and flow of knowledge Perform gap analysis Provide recommendations (b) Do knowledge planning <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Plan knowledge-management strategy Build a supportive, knowledge-sharing culture Create and define knowledge-management initiatives Develop a cost-benefit analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge audit document: survey the status of knowledge in the organization. Emphasis is on identifying core competencies and weaknesses Visual prototype: knowledge map showing taxonomy and flow of knowledge Knowledge-management program plan: document specifying the initiatives and programs that will be used to meet knowledge-management goals Requirements specifications document: document identifying the technological requirements for the knowledge-management system (i.e. hardware and software)
	2. Perform physical modelling	(c) Develop the physical architecture <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the framework for access, input/update, storage and eventual distribution and use Develop a high level meta-data design Construct a visual prototype 	
Act	1. Capture and secure knowledge	(a) Collect and verify knowledge (b) Evaluate the knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge acquisition document: this document contains the methods and presumptions used in the process of acquiring knowledge for the knowledge-management system based on the findings in the knowledge audit and the knowledge-management program plan Design document: this document contains the knowledge classification and encoding system as well as high-level knowledge mapping into a computer system (i.e. file structures) Visual and technical knowledge-management system prototypes: presentation of screen-mockups and technical design of the knowledge-management system
	2. Represent knowledge	(a) Formalize how the knowledge is represented (b) Classify the knowledge (c) Encode the knowledge	
	3. Organize and store knowledge in the knowledge-management system		
	4. Combine knowledge	(a) Retrieve and integrate knowledge from the entire organization	
	5. Create knowledge	(a) Have open discussion with customers and interested parties, both internal and external to the organization (b) Perform exploration and discovery (c) Conduct experimentation (i.e. trial and error)	
	6. Share knowledge	(a) Distribute knowledge	

(continued)

Phase	Procedure(s)	Subprocedure(s)	Outputs
		(b) Make knowledge easily accessible	
	7. Learn knowledge and loop back to step 1 of this phase		
Revise	1. Pilot operational use of the knowledge-management system		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation methodology and results document: general evaluation and review of the KM system. This document will evaluate the fitness of the developed KM system for implementation in the transfer phase. Critical analysis of the completed KM system, which includes the determination of whether the program is ready for transfer and will be completed, and recommendations to continue development will be evaluated. The documentation of the evaluation methodologies used for the review and the documented results of the review are required
	2. Conduct knowledge review	(a) Perform quality control <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review knowledge for validity and accuracy Update knowledge (b) Perform relevance review <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prune knowledge and retain what is relevant, timely and accurate and proven useful 	
	3. Perform knowledge-management system review	(a) Test and evaluate achieved results (b) Revalidate/test against metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-management system prototype II: a pre-production, fully functional release of the KM system • User's guide for knowledge-management system: the methods and procedures developed for the KM system are compiled into a guide for use as a training document and the coordination of standard practices. The guide should describe both internal system processes and how the system interacts with the environment
Transfer	1. Publish knowledge		
	2. Coordinate knowledge-management activities and functions	(a) Create integrated knowledge-transfer programs (b) Notify where knowledge is located and lessons learned (c) Perform serious anecdote management (i.e. publicize testimonials of the benefits of the KMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance document for KM system: following the completion of the final version of the KM system, documentation describing the general maintenance and change process for the system are created • Fully functional KM system: the final delivered and installed KM system
	3. Use knowledge to create value for the enterprise	(a) Sell (e.g. package knowledge bases for sale) (b) Apply (e.g. knowledge-management consulting services, apply methodology) (c) Use (e.g. improve customer satisfaction, employee support and training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-audit document: following the completed transfer of the KM system a follow-up audit of the entire process is completed. This will include all lessons learned, user experiences, best/worst practices and proposed changes to the methodology and/or KM system. The post-audit will also include proposals for new initiatives and enhancements for the system
	4. Monitor knowledge-management activities via metrics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learned document: lessons learned and other appropriate learning functions will be formatted and loaded into the appropriate corporate memory location for dissemination throughout the organization
	5. Conduct post-audit		
	6. Expand knowledge-management initiatives		
	7. Continue to learn and loop back through the phases		

3.2 Implementation to the Project

By choosing this method, the blog will be developed once the survey has been analyzed. Once the survey is completed, data will be aggregated and analyzed so that the blog that will be created is suited on what students and lecturers needs and requirement. The methodology will be implemented in this projects as shown in Table II.

Table II : Details of the project methodology

PHASE	PROCEDURE	SUBPROCEDURE	OUTPUTS
Strategies	1) Perform planning	a) Determine key knowledge requirements (i.e. no sharing medium, trust)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current final year student conditions on knowledge sharing
Model	1) Performance conceptual modelling 2) Perform physical modelling	a) Conduct knowledge audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify type of knowledge need for FYP students Identify trend of knowledge sharing among FYP students. a) Develop the prototype : blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge audit document : survey
Act	1) Capture and secure knowledge	a) Collect and verify knowledge b) Evaluate knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The statistical data that will be retrieved from the blog.
Revise	1) Conduct knowledge review	a) Perform quality control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review knowledge for validity Update knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content of the blog
Transfer	1) Publish knowledge 2) Use knowledge to create value 3) Continue to look back through the phases	a) Prove the hypothesis b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson learned document (result)

3.3 Research Methodology

The target population of this study is the blogs of *A New Chapter Of Me* (<http://firnass-anewchapterofme.blogspot.com/>). In terms of writing style, the author adopted a formal/official writing style to different posts in the blog. The information then retrieved form the number of users participates in every single posts in the blog.

This project methodology has two parts. In the first part, the author will publish posts with different writing style which is formal and non-formal. The aim of this case study is to analyze the pattern number of users to participate (number of user, comments from user) surfing on that blog for that post. There are 35 posts has been published to the blog since July 2008 until April 2009, where the post writing style has been differentiate according to months. Table III present the number of post with formal and non formal writing style according to months.

In terms of writing style, the author adopted a casual tone for blog non-formal blog entries. The author use “chatty” style about some events, recipes and included a lot of personal observation and opinion.

Table III : Number of post

MONTH	NUMBER OF POST	WRITING STYLE
August 2008	3	Formal
September 2008	3	Non Formal
October 2008	4	Formal
November 2008	4	Non Formal
February 2009	4	Formal
March 2009	4	Non Formal

In the second part, the author will carry out an analysis to proof the hypothesis that has been suggested for this project.

The following hypothesis will be tested:

H_0 : There is no difference on user participation by using formal writing style.

H_1 : There is a difference on user participation by using non-formal writing style.

3.4 Development Tools

Here are the recommended tools for the development of this system:

3.4.1 Software

This is the list of minimum, software needed to use throughout the whole project:

- Blog service (Blogspot)
- Online survey service
- Blog Stat Counter

3.4.2 Compatible Browser

Currently, the blog display best performance on the Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0. and Mozilla. While on Netscape, these browsers differ in functionality, speed and feature.

CHAPTER 4

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data gathering and analysis

The data comes from a blog A New Chapter Of Me that has been created purposely for this project (<http://firnass-anewchapterofme.blogspot.com/>). The information was taken from the information on the number of returning users to the blog, which determine the person is returning to your website for another visit an hour or more later based purely on a cookie. This reflect the number of same user that returning to the blog that have been posting using different writing style for certain months. It shows the number of loyal user for the month that use two different wiriting style for the blog.

The results of the analysis shows that the non-formal writing style post did attract more users to participate, give comments compared to formal writing style post. The overall access rates of the non-formal post are very high. Statistics generated by the BlogsStats Counter software demonstrate that many people accessed the blog from domains inside the university while quite a big number from outside university and several form overseas. (Indonesia, UK, etc)

This appeared to be a successful strategy by writing with non-formal style because readers enjoyed this approach and found it more interesting to read than a more “official” tone. Some casual posts were greatly commented on by readers.

Table 4 and Figure 2 shows the number of user attract to the blog based on three criteria (number of page loads, unique visitor and returning visitor). *Returning Visitors* - Based purely on a cookie, if this person is returning to your website for another visit an hour or more later. *First Time Visitors* - Based purely on a cookie, if

this person has no cookie then this is considered their first time at your website. *Unique Visitor* - Based purely on a cookie, this is the total of the returning visitors and first time visitors - all your visitors. *Page Load* - The number of times your page has been visited.

Summary (A new chapter of me)

[Daily](#) | [Weekly](#) | **[Monthly](#)** | [Quarterly](#) | [Yearly](#)

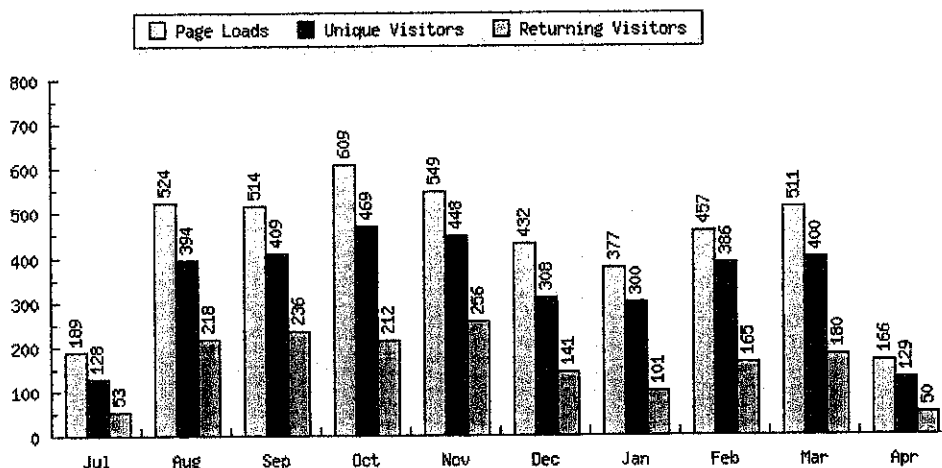


Figure 2 : Summary of number of users

Table 4 : Summary number of users according to writing style

Month	Page Loads	Writing Style	Returning Visitors
Jul-08	189	-	-
Aug-08	524	FORMAL	218
Sep-08	514	NON FORMAL	236
Oct-08	609	FORMAL	212
Nov-08	549	NON FORMAL	256
Dec-08	432	-	-
Jan-09	377	-	-
Feb-09	457	FORMAL	165
Mar-09	511	NON FORMAL	180
Apr-09	166	-	-

Findings for this analysis is the number of returning visitor for the months implementing non formal blog post is greater than the formal blog posts. This indicates that the same users are more actively participate and attract to the non formal writing style to obtain and share the knowledge compared to formal writing style. This analysis proof H1 that state there is a difference on user participation by using formal or non-formal writing style. User tend to be loyal the blog post that have similar trend of non formal writing style. The same user that who knew the trend will continuously review the blog for next post for the month.

A new chapter of me (Returning Visits) 11th April 2009 04:09:48

[REDACTED] Your log size of 500 has 500 entries. Ask your admin about increasing your log size!

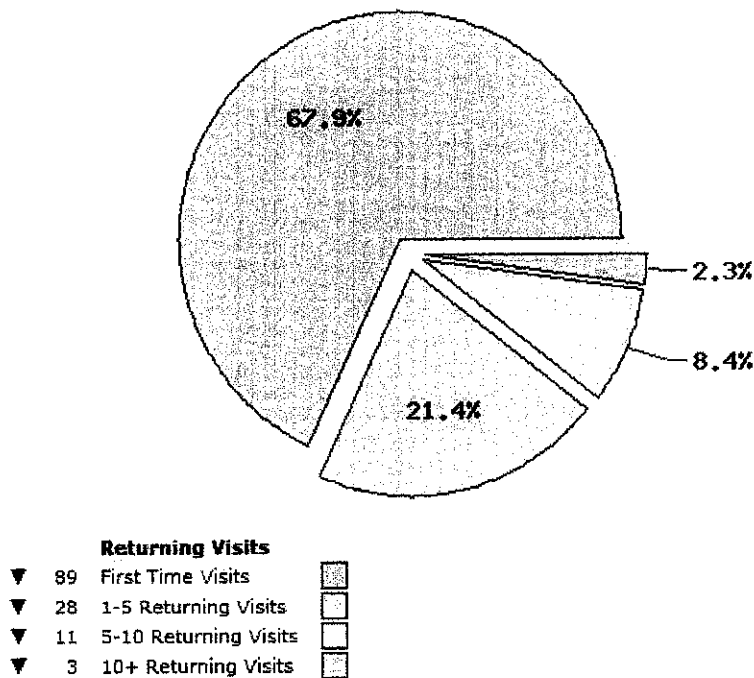


Figure 3 : Analysis on number of returning visits

4.2 Prototype

The blog has been created purposely for this project with different kind of post writing style. The blog address is <http://firnass-anewchapterofme.blogspot.com/>. Figure 5 show blog prototype while Figure 6 show total number of user that analysed by BlogStatsCounter Software.

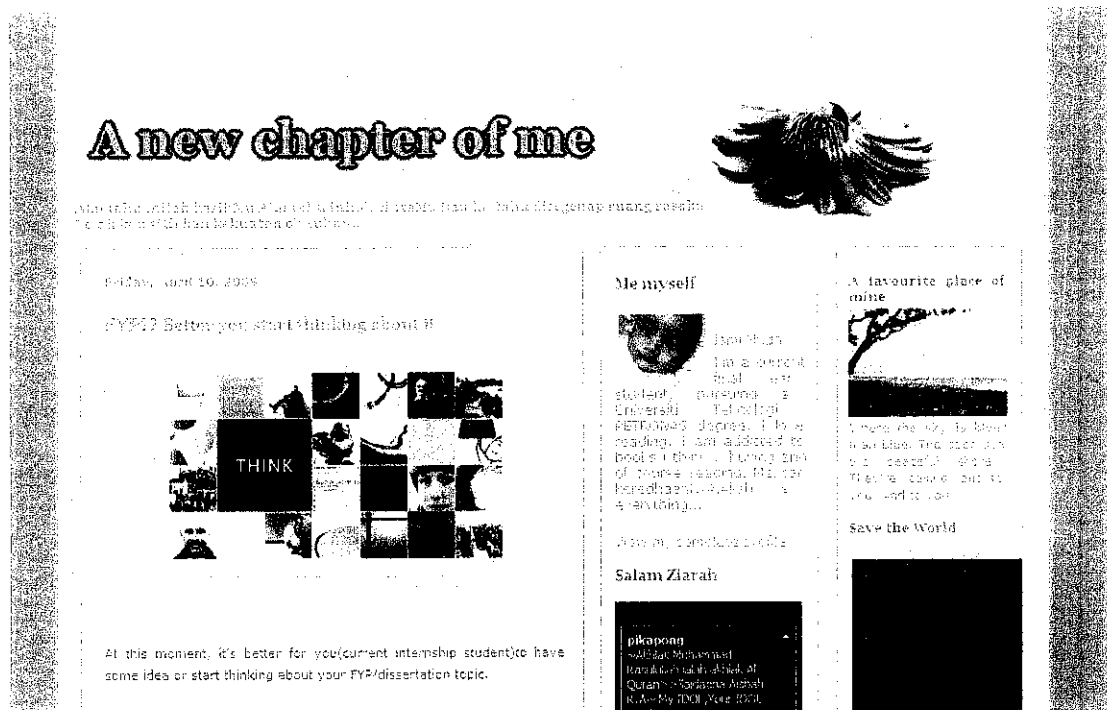


Figure 4 : Blog Screenshot

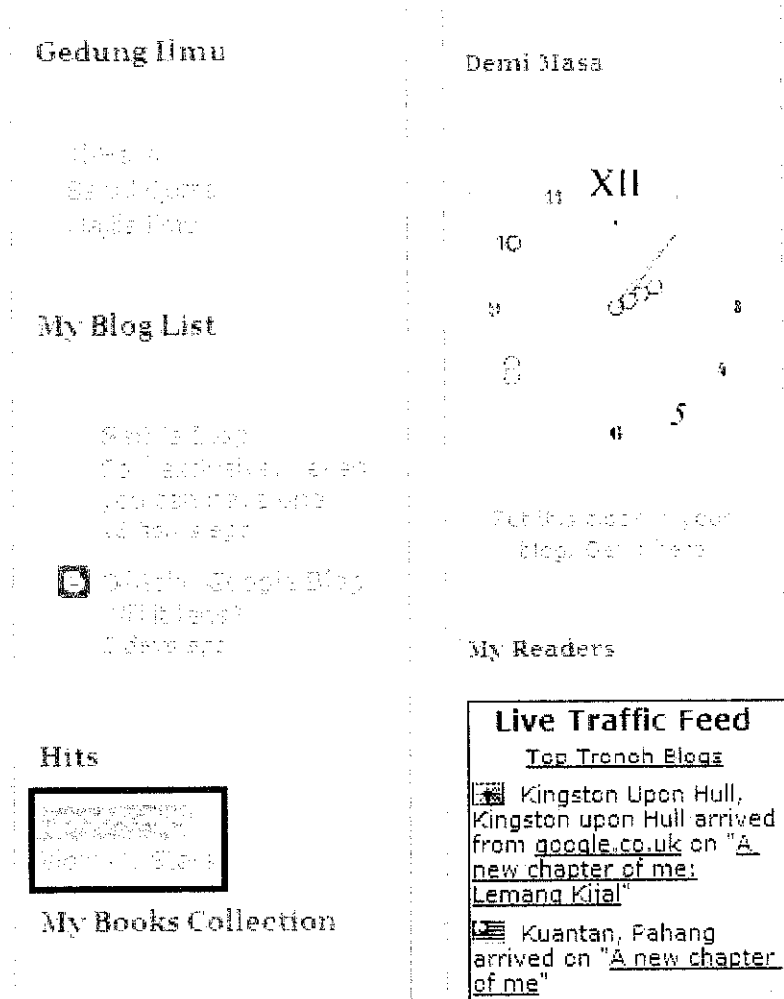


Figure 5 : Blog Statistic Counter

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to develop test and analyze factors that influence users' intention to participate (sharing of knowledge) through a kind of social network, which is blog. The author verified the effect of writing style on the behaviour/participation of blog users and proof the hypothesis. The research found that non formal blog writing style is important to determine the participation of users on sharing knowledge through blogs compared to formal kind of writing style.

5.1. Recommendation on next course of action

A number of possible limitations of this study should be considered. First, the project was not meant to include all possible factors affecting the user participation through blogs. Second, the blog promotion should be more emphasize to attract user over Malaysia.

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