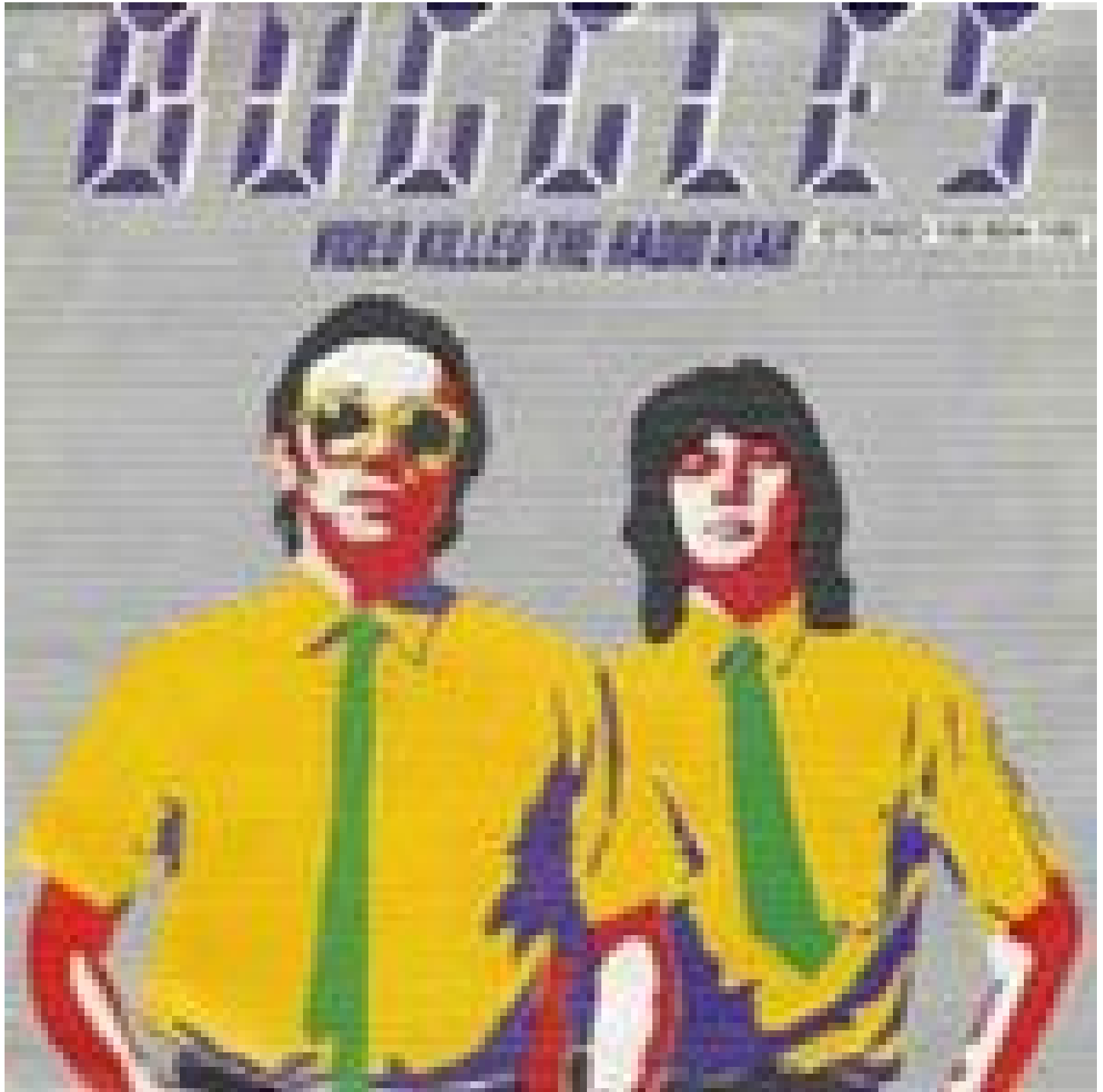


Video killed the radio star

By [Pedro de Gouveia](#)

23 Nov 2007

This new wave song by British band Buggles was the first music video to be shown on MTV, when the station debuted in the US in September 1981. The song was seen to herald the demise of radio. Something that has not quite happened in the 26 years since it was released...





But, now in 2007 is not the turn of Internet and digital to kill the radio star?

Here is a closer look at recent developments within the fields of Internet and digital media, which have impacted upon the way news, entertainment and information, is both shared and consumed.

The booming of the blog

Changes in online technology and communication have turned the Internet into a real-time forum. Participants are now as powerful as the traditional media owners and PR spin doctors. Blogs are unmasking scandals, ending careers, and damaging brands. Yet they are also building and strengthening brands. Understanding blogs and their unique culture and voice is imperative; to try and tap into this new format without that insight may lead to an online brand tongue lashing. Ignoring blogs can also leave you at the mercy of the same Gillette Mach3 razor-sharp tongue lashers.



The advent of the web gave birth to millions of new communicators and content providers internationally. The web page format followed the old broadcast model of one source beaming out to many. Chat groups allowed for more of a conversation, but nothing compared to the volume of noise being generated via weblogs. The creation of blogs and wikis has enabled a very different approach: the real-time open forum.

Blogs may have started as online journals for computer geeks or angst-ridden teens but now they have become a force to be reckoned with in the corporate and political spheres, acting as gatekeepers or even overturning the mainstream media world, ending powerful careers or killing product lines. Yet, understanding and harnessing these new technologies can serve as both an early warning system for what is being said about a company, and as a way for a company to lead the conversation in a manner that positions it as a trusted leader.

What are blogs?

The term “weblog” was coined in 1997 by Jarn Barger whose site Robot Wisdom was an effort to log various sites he encountered on the web. But an accumulation of interesting links is only part of what a blog has become.

Dave Winer, creator of an early blog called Scripting News, said: “Weblogs are often-updated sites that point to articles elsewhere on the web, often with comments, and to on-site articles. A weblog is kind of a continual tour, with a human guide whom you get to know. There are many guides to choose from and each develops an audience.” Blogs are a sort of frequently updated, online journal that mixes personal opinion and daily life with observations and links to other sources and allow for readers to contribute their own thoughts and reactions.



Winer created software making it easy to create a blog (Radio Userland). Other online software specialists such as LiveJournal, Blogger.com and Xanga created web-based blogging templates that allow anyone to start their own blog in minutes with no knowledge whatsoever of programming. The revolution was underway.

Today there are between 10 million and 35 million blogs in the US and some countries, such as Korea, claim more than 10 million. When it comes to business, blogs are being used to hold a conversation with customers, with employees, and with media. They can serve as effective vehicles for marketing, idea testing, knowledge management, crisis communication, and thought leadership.



[click to enlarge](#)

How powerful have blogs become?

On 12 September 2004, someone posted on a blog that a disposable Bic pen could open the supposedly impenetrable Kryptonite bicycle locks. Word spread via blogs. Kryptonite issued a statement that its locks still deterred theft. The *New York Times* published the story the next day. Then, according to blog monitoring site Technorati, nearly two million people visited blogs to read more about it. In the end, Kryptonite paid US\$10 million in replacement locks—that's out of US\$25 million in total revenues.



According to Technorati, 23 000 blogs are created every day; that's one every three seconds—and the number is growing fast. While the vast majority is diary-type blogs only of interest to a few family members or friends, some have gained large audiences.

According to the findings in the Pew Internet & American Life Project (November 2004):

- 27% of all Internet users in the US now read blogs
- that equals 32 million blog readers that's a 58% jump in just nine months
- 7% or 8 million have created their own blog
- 12% or 14 million have posted comments on a blog
- and that is while still 62% do not even know what a blog is



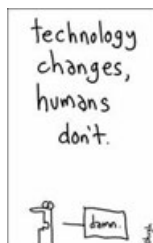
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Clearly the tipping point has been reached and the numbers of blog readers and creators will continue accelerating. And just who are these people?

The Pew study reports that in the US they are:

- 57% male
- 48% are younger than 30
- 42% live in households earning more than US\$50 000
- 39% have college or graduate degrees

So they are a well-educated and affluent community. Yet Pew reports in this latest survey, “There has been greater-than-average growth in blog readership among women, minorities, those between the ages of 30 and 49.”



Among the most popular blogs are those that look at politics, such as Instapundit, and those that chronicle life in a gossip column (Wonkette) or catalogue the latest in gadgets and technology (Gizmodo and BoingBoing).

But business blogs have amassed large audiences as well. Perhaps the most influential are those written by Microsoft's Robert Scoble ("Scobleizer") and Jonathan Schwartz (president of Sun Microsystems). Scoble was formerly with NEC and a blogger who never held back in his criticism of Microsoft. In a gutsy move, Microsoft hired him and not only allowed him to continue blogging, while not appearing to censor him.



The unique characteristics of blogs

Blogs are anti-establishment. They are personal, candid, irreverent, and informal. You will find a personal comment about last night's restaurant right in the middle of a serious analysis of software, a gossipy joke in the midst of an industry overview.

Blogs are no place for so-called brochure ware or the official line. They are the insightful aside by Shakespeare's fool. The blogger, while acerbic, is also humble in that he or she is quick to give credit to the writing and thinking of others by way of embedded links.



RSS newsreaders

Blogs can be read like any other web site by going to its URL (ex: www.autoblog.com).

However, about all blogs offer another option via something called RSS. RSS stands for "really simple syndication." It is a form of programming that allows users to shop for, or subscribe to content, and bundle it together into a custom kind of browser called a feed aggregator or newsreader.

RSS or another similar technology called Atom, pushes or feeds the updated content automatically so all the user need do is open their newsreader and all the RSS feeds will deliver the absolute latest content from web sites or blogs.

This means the reader need never check back with or visit the original web site where they found the content. And they need not register for an email newsletter, nor risk being spammed. Most RSS links look like this:





Using RSS means a constant, automatic stream of headlines, updated blog entries, or press releases. Soon media will come to expect companies to provide all releases in this format. Some of the readers are free, web-based services while others require downloading software and may require a subscription fee. The best allow you to bundle content into custom folders. Some will integrate directly into MS Outlook.

ABOUT PEDRO DE GOUVEIA

Pedro de Gouveia is GM of Salient Strategic Advertising and Design, which opened its doors in March 2006. The agency has more than 80 years of accumulated management experience acquired from within the South African advertising and marketing industry. Clients include Red Security, Shoprite, Caturra, Hungry Lion, Boss Paving, International Academy of Health and Skin Care and OFRA Cosmetics (USA).

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