

Blogs are a mainstream media worldwide

 By [Walter Pike](#)

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Universal McCann recently released their Wave 3 study and in it 17 000 internet users in 29 countries were interviewed. What is clear is that participation and sharing information over the internet is a rapidly burgeoning trend.

South Africa was not one of the countries in which interviews were conducted but that does not detract from the value of the information, which points to major trends which if not already reflected in South Africa soon will be.

Internet access is restricted to the higher strata of South African society, but billions of rand are none the less already spent on the internet annually, and there are millions of internet users who account for a large proportion of the South African economic spend.

The Wave 3 researchers have identified these points as highlights:

- The vast majority of users are producing content and there is an ongoing shift towards participation.
- Media consumption is internationalising along language lines thanks to global social platforms.
- Consumers are moving to on-demand media such as video clips and podcasts.
- The role for advertisers and brands has never had so much potential - branded applications, content and services all offer huge potential in social media.
- Emerging internet markets are leading the way in usage, closing the gap with developed countries.

More Wave 3 trends:

1. Social media is a global phenomenon happening in all markets regardless of wider economic, social and cultural development. If you are online you are using social media.
2. Asian markets are leading in terms of participation, creating more content than any other region.
3. All social media platforms have grown significantly over the three Waves...Video Clips are the quickest growing platform, up from 31% penetration in Wave 1 to 83% in Wave 3; 57% have joined a Social Network, making it the number one platform for creating and sharing content; 55% of users have uploaded photos; 22% of users have uploaded videos.
4. The widget economy is real: 23% of social network users have installed an application; 18% of bloggers have installed applications in their blog templates.
5. Blogs are a mainstream media worldwide and as a collective, rival any traditional media: 73% have read a blog.
6. The blogosphere is becoming increasingly participatory, there are now 184 million bloggers worldwide.
7. The number one thing to blog about is personal life and family.
8. China has the largest blogging community in the world with 42 million bloggers - more than the US and Western Europe combined.

9. Social media impacts your brand's reputation: 34% post opinions about products and brands on their blog; 36% think more positively about companies that have blogs.

The report also touches on the use of social media applications in niched segments but does not make any mention of the value of using the technology in internal corporate cultural change and brand advocacy which I see as a very important future trend.

- The report can be downloaded from the Universal McCann website: <http://www.universalmccann.com/>.

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