Observations on Failure in Blogs

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Abstract

The capability of placing "comments" on the posts makes the blogspaces rather a complex environment. One of the interesting phenomena in blogspace is "blogger failure" when a blogger stops writing after a certain amount of time and will not return to blogspace for a long time, or when a blogger does not get any comment from her audience. In this paper we illustrate our observation on bloggers failure in a unique blogspace. First, we introduce PersianBlog blogspace briefly along with our observations of behaviors of bloggers on placing comments. Next, we will provide our definition of failure, and give a broad future research path to model failure in blogspace.

Keywords

Modeling, Failure, Blogs

1. Introduction

Blogs are interesting forms of large social networks. In the blogosphere, bloggers have relationships with others through links and comments. A given blogger usually have a set of friends, and a regular number of readers, which tend to comment on her postings. While there are several works on issues related to blogospheres, the blogspace is so complicated that it has may unidentified mysteries behind. One of these facts is the phenomenon of "Blogger Failure" or when a blogger stops blogging. We introduce two types of failures: *Connection-failure* and *Commitment-failure*. *Connection-failure* occurs when a blogger loses her visitors gradually, until she has no visitors at all, and gets no comments on her postings. This blogger might continue writing posts, even when she does not receive any comments. Such a behavior is not considered in our study since in our definition, the identity of a blog is defined by its interactions, and its role in a larger network, say blogosphere.

Commitment-failure occurs when a blogger starts a blog and *quits* writing after a while due to several hidden or well-known reasons. In this paper, our goal is to present a brief observation on the *Failure* phenomenon which could be employed successfully in future attempts to devise a model. To our knowledge there is no previous work that directly addresses the problem of failure in blogs. However, there are many studies around blogspace. While many researches on weblogs, focus on post data, few researchers have focused on
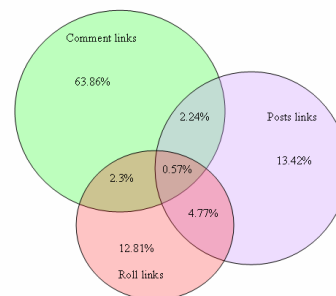
Fig. 1: *Venn Diagram for different links distribution*

Weblogs	22,306
Posts	348,700
Correct Comments	1,257,561
Accuracy	93%
Commented Posts	339,884 (97.5%)
Uncommented Posts	8,816 (2.5%)
Average Comment Per Post	3.6

Table 1: *Basic analysis on corpus size*

comments. Trevino et al. [4] show the importance of comments in blog analysis, and [2] investigates the relations of comments and posts, and extracts commenting pattern based on blog popularity.

2. Data corpus

We selected the fast growing Persian weblogs [3] for our study. By October 2005, Persian weblogs were estimated to be about 700,000[1] (out of an estimated total value of 100 million blogs worldwide), of which about 40,000-110,000 are active , mostly written in Persian language. The data is collected by crawling PersianBlog.com[2] which contains more than 22,000 weblogs in a 15 months period. Table 1 illustrates several features of collected data set. for more information about this data set please look at [1].

We observed four type of links in our study [3]:

- *Blog Roll Link* which is a link in the side bar of blog page. These links point to blogs of the blogger's friends.

- *Post Link* is a hyperlink in the body of a post.

- *OutLink* is a link in the body of a comment.

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[1] www.blogherald.com/2005/10/10
[2] www.persianblog.com
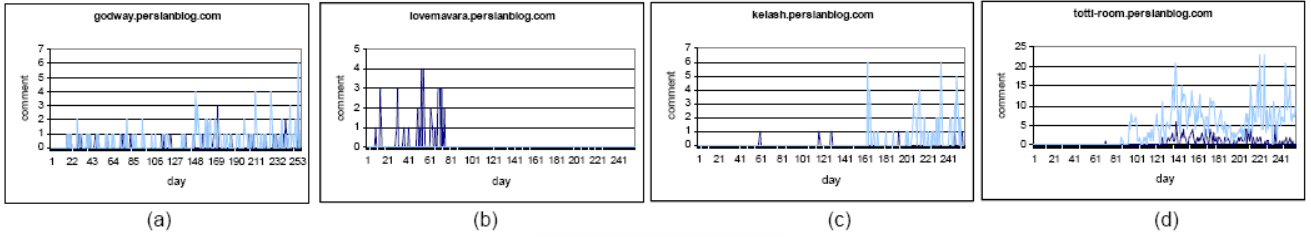
Fig. 2: *Sample Observations. Dark blue shows the sent comments, and light blue shows the received comments. A blog of category I (a), II (b), III (c), IV (d)*

- *InLink* is a hyperlink in the footer of a comment and points to the address of the person who placed the comment.

The number of *outLinks* are negligible in comparison with other types of links. The Venn diagram in Fig.1 shows such distribution. It is clear that *Comment Links* with nearly 70% of all links in corpus have a noticeable contribution in formation of the blogspace graph. Hence, we based our observations and definitions on *inLink* graph.

3. Failure and comments

In this section we will give our understanding and definition of *failure* in blogspaces. Blogroll links form a quite static network, and Post Links, do not have the contribution of comments. To model the failure phenomenon we introduce 5 different categories of comments in the following:

Category I. Two (or more) bloggers get involved in discussions. One comments on a posting of the other and vice versa. This blogger might lose her audience if she delays in responding her friends. Fig. 2 (a) shows an instance.

Category II. A Blogger puts comments for other bloggers, but does not receive any comments subsequently. As a result, this blogger might stop commenting on other blogs' postings. An example of this category is shown in Fig. 2 (b).

Category III. A blogger receives many comments, where she rarely leaves comments herself. These are several well-known bloggers who write postings that many people read and comment. A sample is illustrated in Fig. 2 (c). The blogger receives comments nearly 8 times as many as the comments he leaves for others in a period of time.

Category IV. The number of comments left and received for a blogger in this category are correlated which is the main motivation for that blogger to involve in the social aspects of blogspace. A sample of such blogs is given in Fig. 2 (d).

Category V. A blogger neither receives comments, nor does she tend to place comments on others' posts. She might have even banned the commenting possibility on her blog. We do not consider this type in our study.

We assume that bloggers start from a blog and follow a series of links to reach a desired blog. So we assume there is no random visit by typing the URL address. Also we assume a constant percentile of readers leave comments and each comment is followed by a link to commenter's blog. Hence, the number of comments could be a good representative for the number of readers and thus visitors of that blog. Blog world is full of readers, authors and many links and strategies among them. Authors put comments to attract readers and place links in their blogs to make their own community with the potential of loosing a reader going out of
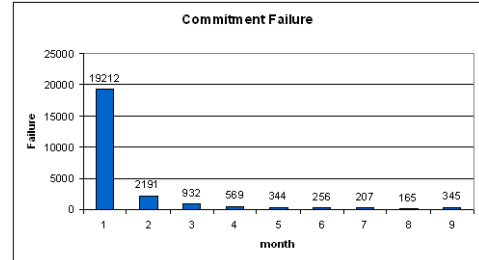
Fig. 3: *Chart of Commitment Failure: Each bar shows the number of failures in which the blogger only wrote posts for the given length of months*

their blogs.

A blogger, to our understanding, actually *fails* if she cannot maintain a non-decreasing number of visitors over time. Visitors often read the most recent post of a blog they visit, specially if they have already read the previous posts. So a link from the most recent and top post is more valuable than a link from other posts. These links may carry more visitors and will gather more readers for a blog. The strategy could be so that one's inlinks do not get very out-dated.

To study *Commitment Failure* we examined our data over a period of 9 months. As it shows in Fig. 3, 80% of all bloggers that started a new blog in that period, quitted after one month. A basic observation is that, the probability of failure is much less for a blogger which has been writing for a longer time, in comparison with a new blogger.

4. Future work

We believe, there is a vast area for future work in this field. Our future works are twofold. First we would like to provide a formal definition for failure along with a game theory-based model the address failure phenomenon in blogs. Second we would like to study failure triggers and to extract relevant features to classify failures based on them.

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