

blogosphere

for bloggers by bloggers

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Blogger down under

Lucy Reville, of **The Residents**, shares the advantages and limitations of blogging from the bottom of the world



Wellington (my home town) is 'The Creative Capital' of New Zealand; we pretty much made the entire *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy in our back-garden. It's home to folk comedy due to *Flight of the Conchords* and there's more coffee than you can shake an aeropress at.

'Of course', I thought to myself back in 2012 - when I first started blogging - 'someone is already blogging'. After all, the blog had been around since 1997. Via the highly scientific Google Search method, I was shocked to learn that no-one was blogging.

Three years on, after a blog hiatus, I searched again. Still nothing new had emerged for Wellington and quite little for Auckland (our largest city of 1 million). Yet in New Zealand so many girls were killing it style-wise and there were so many interesting Kiwis who could have had blogs. How was New Zealand, colonial offspring to mother England, so far behind the curve on blogging?

In 2016, blogging is now a multi-million dollar industry worldwide, particularly in the UK and the US. Brands, mainly beauty brands, pour millions of dollars into getting their products in the hands of the right blogger. So really it should have been no surprise to me, as a New Zealander, that most of what came up on YouTube and Google was from UK and US perspectives. Much like our rare native bird, there was scarce a Kiwi to be sighted.

One of the problems for the antipodes is that from fashion trends to TV shows "what's hot" always tends to arrive late to the party, because we have opposite seasons to the UK. I had an informal discussion with colleagues at work about how much blog content they consume. Three of the five colleagues (both male and female) said they consumed 70-80% of their media online. However, the other two said they almost never watched YouTube videos or read blogs. "I just don't think to do it" said one, shrugging.

The problem is reading blogs and



blogging is still seen a quirky niche in New Zealand, and is yet to break into the mainstream the way it has overseas. As a result, people haven't caught on to the joy of writing their own blogs or - if they do - tend to abandon them after a few months.

Australians have more readily embraced YouTube and blogging. The likes of Stephanie Lange ([youtube.com/c/stephanielangemakeupartistry](https://www.youtube.com/c/stephanielangemakeupartistry)), Karissa Pukas ([youtube.com/c/karissapukas](https://www.youtube.com/c/karissapukas)), Margaret Zhang ([margaretzhang.com.au](https://www.margaretzhang.com.au)), Gary Pepper ([garypeppergirl.com](https://www.garypeppergirl.com)) and Harper & Harley ([harperandharley.com](https://www.harperandharley.com)), while not quite household names, are known and respected. By contrast, the shortage here is such that Australian bloggers were literally flown in from 'across the ditch' for New Zealand Fashion week.

New Zealand's small population is certainly one factor. The UK has 64 >

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Blogging is still seen as a quirky niche in New Zealand



Jamie Curry



Victoria Nunns



Shannon Harris

million people. The US has 381 million. We have four million. A smaller pool of people means fewer people wanting to be content creators, particularly when they don't get paid for it. Businesses have also been slow to utilise what new talent there is, meaning blogger events have been few and far between. Yet this is only part of the answer.

When it comes to film, for example, (see: What we do in the Shadows/The Piano/ Heavenly Creatures) Kiwis do disproportionately well. Yet the hurdles to entry for film making are far higher than for making a YouTube video. What is so different about being online?

In many other countries, having an online presence is now an essential ingredient to raise your profile for work. Ultimately, New Zealanders consider putting yourself out there online to be 'a bit cringe-worthy' (we have no celebrity scene so to speak, except for the All Blacks and Lorde). Self-promotion and personal branding is not seen as a necessary thing. 'Tall poppy syndrome' - the idea that if you do well people will cut you down - is feared.

There are, however, some bloggers breaking the mould. For example Beth Brash, who raised her profile through writing a blog called Eat and Greet, which documented the people behind the restaurants and cafés of Wellington.

She now manages the major national beer festival, Beervana, as part of the annual Wellington on a Plate Festival.

She admits that she would "a hundred percent" not be where she is today without her blog. However, she gave up blogging when she reached

her goal due to time constraints.

So is there actually potential to blog as a job - rather than as a means to land one?

For those who dare to dream and stick with it, success can be found. Australian YouTuber Lauren Curtis (laurenbeauty) has over 3 million subscribers and Chloe Morello, also Australian, has over 1 million YouTube subscribers.

At least two New Zealanders are making a living from their blogging/vlogging, too.

Shannon Harris (Shaaanxo) has two channels on YouTube with 2.5 million subscribers on her main channel and a further half a million on the other. Jamie Curry has 9 million followers on Facebook and 1.3 million on YouTube. Key to Jamie and Shannon's success is that they have stuck at content creation for years (Jamie started in 2012 and Shannon started around 2008). Another rising blogger is Sally Jo, daughter of former news reader Jim Hickey who has 178,000 followers on YouTube and 80,000 on Instagram.

In New Zealand, though some are still only starting to understand online influencers, demand for local content creators is increasing rapidly. Girls want to see other girls representing their culture and background. New Zealand is a country with many diverse backgrounds from Maori, New Zealand's indigenous people, to its rising Asian and Middle Eastern population. This creates space for lots of different types of blogs.

At the end of the day, the experience



of an Australian beauty follower is different to that of a New Zealand beauty follower. YouTuber Victoria Nunns saw this gap in the market as an opportunity. She started her beauty Instagram page and quickly found that her pictures were drawing attention and became inspired to start her own YouTube (www.youtube.com/victorianunns). The beauty blogging market is still small but starting to grow, so it was a great time for Victoria to dip her toe in the micellar water (so to speak).

Businesses, both nationally and internationally, are now starting to cotton on to the benefit of using a few locally grown bloggers and are supporting them by sending PR samples and starting to host bloggers at events. Victoria agrees: "Last year, the amount of product I was being asked to review was overwhelming. It was obvious then that I needed to make it more of a job and less of a hobby.

"I got myself an agent earlier this year to help gain opportunities as well as to do all the negotiating with brands or companies - a job I do not feel comfortable doing."

The advantage of New Zealand is that the blog market is still uncrowded. With fewer bloggers over here, it means your voice is more likely to be heard. Whereas the markets in the UK and US are - as they readily admit - saturated, in New Zealand (at this time) it is still possible to cold call someone and have a coffee about career opportunities. Victoria agrees: "The professional environment in NZ has 100% supported

me. I feel that currently there are only a few beauty bloggers who are quality bloggers. The NZ beauty industry is quite good at recognising talent early on and supporting it."

So if there are any of you Southern Hemisphere folk wondering if you should get in and start a blog, do! Start before you feel ready. Don't just think that it is something for only UK or US folk. Blogs also are an excellent way to meet people and broaden networks. And if you feel like coming and checking out Wellington, I'll have the kettle on. ☺



Businesses are starting to cotton on to the benefit of using locally grown bloggers



Lucy Revill