Blog articles vs articles

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One thing I've been wondering about lately is when should one write blog articles (short articles ranging from 250 to 1000 words) or articles (1000+ words) which would be updated (in)frequently but not be as easily consumable.

The main reason I've preferred articles over blog articles is that it makes it possible to keep articles "alive", while once a blog article has been published, it will not evolve over time. By the time it is posted, it is effectively dead and has very little reason to change.

Being a programmer, I've always enjoyed seeing software project evolve over the years. They start small and grow big and complex over time. I like the satisfaction of seeing something grow step by step, and because of that, I've liked the idea of writing about specific topics and seeing these topics and articles change over time.

The problem with articles however is that it is difficult for visitors to consume. Some articles might grow large and complex. Furthermore, it is difficult for visitors to notice any changes from the last time they've come onto the blog.

Another thing is that articles allow the author to "refactor" what he has written, or rewrite/rephrase/reword, such that the article itself improves over time. With a blog article, it is still possible to do so, but the expectation is that a visitor that has already seen the blog article will not re-read it. And here's the important difference between the two: I expect blog articles to be consumed once, but articles to be consumed multiple times. This expectation is likely wrong. The only person that is likely to consume the same article over and over is its author. Visitors may come to the blog many times, but they are unlikely to expect articles to change over time. An extreme example of this idea would be Wikipedia. People will consult the page of the topic they are interested in, but once they've read it, they aren't likely to come back to it again. The only reason they might do so is if they contribute to it.

What this means is that it is still acceptable to improve both blog articles and articles. The difference lies in how we expect our audience to consume each ones. Articles are likely to be seen as references while blog posts are likely to be perceived as an ephemeral observation. One should expect both to be consumed at best once by a visitor, and that the visitor will not come again to see if it has changed.

Thus, in the end, what matters is what we want to communicate with our audience. Do I want to tell you about a thought (a blog article) or do I want to tell you about some information that is likely to evolve over time (an article).

In the case of my machine learning and artificial general intelligence research, what makes sense is to communicate discoveries or shifts in approaches through blog articles while using articles as a location for thoughts to be worked on.