

themediainline

TOP FIVE* READS OF THE MONTH

- 1 About: Sowetan proves that sex still sells.** Wow. That's all we can say about this story that received a whopping great 36 886 hits and still counting. *The Sowetan* story proved that sex still sells – even on TheMediaOnline.
- 2 About: Gwen Gill – Sometimes sharp, sometimes sweet, NEVER boring.** Our tribute to Gwen Gill as a former colleague, a unionist, a consumer columnist and the most famous social commentator South Africa has ever seen was as popular as the lady herself.
- 3 About: Press Council Review pushes for sweeping changes.** *The Media's* editor, Peta Krost Maunder, wrote the story on what the Press Council hearings that took place across South Africa revealed about the state of our media. The consensus? Changes must be made in the way in which our media operates.
- 4 About: Jacaranda 94.2 takes battle for rhinos to poachers.** The heartwarming story on how the Jacaranda community, from the station to DJs to listeners, have rallied behind the fight to stop rhino poaching. Over R1-million has been raised to train and equip rangers.
- 5 About: The state of play at Bush Radio.** A sad story on how one of Cape Town's – and South Africa's – oldest community radio stations is under threat due to lack of funds. The story even inspired readers to donate money to help save the station.

*Based on the number of hits

For the full articles, log on to www.themediainline.co.za

HE SAID IT >>

A COMMENT FROM THEMEDIAONLINE

Chatmeter commented on 'A step by step guide to managing your online reputation':

Great advice for Online Reputation Management. Now more than ever it is so important for business owners to monitor their brand across the internet, like you mentioned not only listening but engaging with the audience and swinging them over to your point of view.

social media realism

Is social media a waste of time?

WADIM SCHREINER, MANAGING DIRECTOR, MEDIA TENOR SOUTH AFRICA

NO, I AM NOT JOINING THE GROUP OF people who think that social media is a waste of time. Neither am I moving in the circles of those celebrating the fact that the number of people on Facebook is declining. I remain mesmerised by social media. Though, five years down the line, I have grown to be more realistic about what it can and cannot do.

As social media increasingly takes over traditional media as sources of facts and content, my levels of concern rise. Call it lazy journalism, but the growing number of articles that refer to Twitter conversations as 'opinion' or where discussions that took place on Twitter become news stories make me uneasy.

Let me be clear. Twitter comments do not constitute public opinions. They do not represent what people in South Africa think. They represent what people who have an opinion on Twitter think. There is a big difference and any journalist who uses such comment to make a link to public sentiment is simply wrong.

There is a reason why social media has anecdotal influence, but is still considered less trustworthy than any of the traditional media. Gareth Cliff is alleged to have a rate card, where public endorsement of a product can be purchased. PR companies are asking media companies to pull online coverage that has been criticised by clients. Arab lesbian women bloggers turn out to be straight American men.

The essence of the social media offering is a conversation between individuals or a group of people, with other individuals or groups sharing a similar interest. Dialogue, but not public opinion. A second reality check for social media is that this medium does, in fact, impact on business-to-consumer communication and in all likelihood, on purchasing decisions. However, there is no scientific proof that social media influences business-to-business communication or policy development.



Then there is the so-called sentiment analysis offered by commercial social media companies, which supposedly represents the opinion of people. This is scientifically scaly to say the least. Having tested numerous software solutions that represent sentiment, I have yet to find one that can replace human analysis. Humour, sarcasm and sentence construction are impossible to detect by algorithms and pre-defined lexica. In reality, people do not use the Queen's English. Words or phrases tumble over one another, often not expressing what was intended and sometimes switching between languages. Any survey that is published based on such automated sentiment analysis is, in the Queen's English, nonsense.

Yet there is undoubtedly a steep upside to the rise of social media. Despite the fact that it cannot claim to represent public opinion and has trust issues. Despite the unreliable nature of social media sentiment analysis, social media has changed the way information flows.

People with opinions can now share these and others can respond. Dialogue across geographical boundaries is on the increase. Resources that were historically difficult to tap into are now literally one click away. 'Factual' information put forward by governments and companies can be countered. The possibilities are evidently enormous, but let us not get too far ahead of ourselves. <<