

## media tweets

# Twitter: value, or pointless babble?

WADIM SCHREINER, MANAGING DIRECTOR, MEDIA TENOR SOUTH AFRICA

IN APRIL THIS YEAR, I TRAVELLED TO San Francisco to attend a major digital conference to learn more about this new trend in reporting called social media. I was green behind the ears. But with my 1 000th tweet a few weeks ago, I now declare that I have reached an advanced stage in the social media world.

I am still flabbergasted how some of my colleagues in the same profession manage to have reached 20 000 tweets and more in the same time, while still running businesses and being otherwise successful – but that's a different discussion altogether.

I have recently decided to put social media to the ultimate test to find out the difference between traditional and social media – in this case represented by Twitter. We took the FIFA World Cup as a time period when South Africa and Africa were less likely to receive the normal stereotyped negative coverage about the country and the continent, and compare that with what international media would write about South Africa and what the tweets had to say.

I won't bore you with methodology and the details but, needless to say, our student assistant used up all the available bandwidth of his home country Namibia to download, filter and categorise the thousands of tweets over the period of the tournament.

We wanted to find out three things: will the conversations on Twitter by non-South Africans resemble the coverage of the traditional media? Will Twitter merely represent a chat medium rather than a news medium? And finally, will the general trend of Afro-pessimism continue during such an event, and will it be reflected in the conversations on Twitter?

I'll give you the answers right away. First – no, Twitter was not just a chat medium. The 'chat part' (we called it 'pointless babble' in the presentation) represented only 19% of all tweets. The rest was about topical issues. So much for Twitter being about 'what type of breakfast I eat'. Second, yes – broadly – the conversations on Twitter were on similar topics as in traditional media, although the latter did focus more on security and infrastructure.

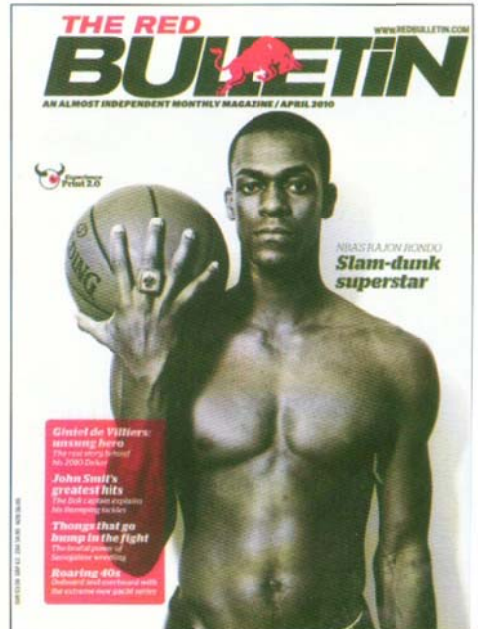
Which brings me to the third – and probably most important – finding: 84% of tweets were neutral, 11% positive and 5% negative.

In the traditional international media, 38% of coverage was neutral, 41% negative and 21% positive. In other words, despite a generally positive event, traditional media continued largely with negative reporting (although granted, the share of positive coverage increased as well). Twitteratis, however, were unfazed. They loved South Africa.

Of course, there are many interpretations of these results (and probably even more criticism of the methodology, the sample selection and whatever else people usually throw at scientists when they don't like the outcome). But if we take the Twitter community as a sample of conversations between people, it seems that traditional media had little impact on their thoughts and discussions.

Which makes me think: are traditional media becoming less and less relevant? Are we just brushing off what is written in the papers? With many journalists already actively participating in the social media sphere, is it just a matter of time until print media's content will change to be more reflective of actual conversations? <<

## media hits



## Simply red



KOJO BAFFOE IS THE EDITOR OF DESTINY MAN

I love the simplicity yet directness of this Red Bulletin cover and that it is clean. Limited cover lines mean the attention is all on the image, which says all that needs to be said. As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. Rajon Rondo, at 21, has

accomplished what many NBA basketball players dream of and spend a career in pursuit of (but never attain) – the NBA Championship Ring. He achieved this leading a team of three legends – Ray Allen, Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett – as point guard of Boston Celtics. The picture says all of this and draws you in.

## HE SAID IT >>

>> "I have been with God and I've been with the devil. I fought between the two. I seized the hand of God. It was the best hand. I always knew God would get us out of there." - Mario Sepulveda, the second miner to be pulled from the Chilean mine where 33 miners were trapped 700 metres underground for 68 days before being rescued.