

16.16: Twitter



Figure 16.16.1: Twitter logo *Adapted From Screenshot, Twitter, 2017*

Introduction and stats

Twitter is the most popular microblogging service. Microblogging is a form of blogging that allows a user to publish short text updates, usually limited to 140 characters, which can be viewed by anyone or restricted to a specific community. Twitter (www.twitter.com) was launched in July 2006. These 140-character posts, called tweets, are usually short thoughts or links to interesting articles.

Note

Twitter trialled using 280 characters in 2017. You can find out more here: www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/technology/twitter280-characters.html

Twitter boasts over 328 million monthly active users, with 100 million of those active daily sharing over 500 million tweets every day. Twitter was thought to be a platform for older users, but latest stats show that nearly 40% of users are between 18 and 29 years old, compared to around 30% of users being between 30 and 49 years old. Twitter is definitely a platform that users access on the go, with over 80% of Twitter users accessing the site from their mobile phone (Omnicores, 2017b)

Features

Each user on Twitter will have a unique username denoted with @ and their chosen name, for example, @robstokes for www.twitter.com/robstokes. Tweets can be directed to a specific user simply by typing their @username at the start of the tweet. This is also known as their twitter handle.

Note

The hashtag was first used in 2007, and used so that users could track the online communications and discussions about a specific event, Barcamp. The #barcamp is thus the first use of the hashtag in social media.

Like Instagram, Twitter users use hashtags to categorise their posts by adding a word or phrase prefaced with the # symbol for example, #DigitalMarketing. The hashtag will become a link that you can click to see other tweets that share this tag. Users can also choose to follow a hashtag, meaning that they will see all public messages with that tag, whether they follow the user who posted it or not. This can be a very useful way of collating information at events such as conferences. If you're not at the event, you can still follow messages from the event by following the hashtag. For those at the event, all tagged messages can be broadcast in a shared location.

If a hashtag or keyword is used very frequently in a short time, it can become a trending topic and is displayed to the left of a user's tweet stream. Events of global interest usually feature heavily, but sometimes brands can trend too (although not always for the right reasons). If a tweet is considered noteworthy, it can be retweeted or quote retweeted. Retweeting means reposting somebody else's tweet to your own profile, along with their username. Twitter automatically displays this as a retweet. A quote retweet allows you to retweet another post, and include a comment about the tweet as well.



Figure 16.16.2: An example of the new 'quote tweet' feature on Twitter that allows you to include a comment about the post you are retweeting *Adapted From iPhone in Canada, 2015*

Marketing and advertising with Twitter

Twitter has become a popular and important marketing tool for many organisations, brands and individuals. Many brands use it successfully for rapid customer service, for example, @jetblue @klm and @dstvcare.

Twitter has become a great market research and consumer insights tool. The ability to search for brand keywords on Twitter and track indirect conversations, offers huge insight to brands.

Its immediacy allows for news to be broadcast to dedicated followers and fans first, as pop star Lady Gaga has done with single releases (@ladygaga). Dell lists several Twitter channels (www.dell.com/twitter), many of which exclusively release offer information (@delloutlet).

Twitter has a series of self-service advertising options, which are covered in detail in the chapter on Online advertising. These include Promoted Tweets, Promoted Accounts and Promoted Trends.

Twitter Analytics

Currently, Twitter Analytics is available to everyone that uses the Twitter API to provide analysis. Hootsuite's Twitter management tools have built in analytics (<https://hootsuite.com/>) that can provide insightful data. Important metrics for Twitter include how many users interact with your content by clicking through on links, how many reply to you, how many retweets you receive, as well as hashtags and trends.

Twitter summary

Twitter remains a powerful platform for brands. It facilitates two-way communication with users, and provides great reach and awareness through possible retweets. The analytics are good, and the hashtags enable great tracking of sentiment about your brand, products and events. The increasing number of ad options is also a great plus for marketers.

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