pearanalytics

analytics   insights   intelligence

twitter

Twitter Study – August 2009

Introduction

We recently completed a study on Twitter in search of finding out what people are *really* using Twitter for. We also compared our research with other studies that were recently done to see how the data compared and if there were any obvious correlations.

You may have noticed that Twitter recently re-vamped their own homepage, moving away from "What are you doing now?" to "Share and discover what's happening right now, anywhere in the world". Does that mean that Twitter is trying to become a real-time news source of citizen journalists?

It also prompts new users to "Join the conversation" – but is that really what Twitter users are really "tweeting" about? Is it really full of meaningful conversation, or senseless babble? Is Twitter meant to be a place to share silly comments and photos with your friends, or a great place to promote your company's product or service? Many marketers are trying to "figure out" how to converse with potential customers – but should they? Or is this why social media was created in the first place – so consumers could rant about the corporations of the world?

Our Hypothesis

Our initial hypothesis that we intended to prove was that Twitter was being used predominantly for self-promotion. These are tweets that are trying to push a product, service or have a distinct "Twitter only offer" of some kind. Our data will show that this is not the case.

Old Twitter:
What are you doing?

New Twitter:
Share and discover what's happening right now, anywhere in the world.

Twitter Demographics

According to Quantcast.com, Twitter has some interesting demographics that they have estimated as of June 2009:

• Twitter reaches 27 million people per month in the U.S.
• 55% are female
• 43% are between 18 and 34
• 78% Caucasian, but African American users are 35% above Internet average
• Average household income is between $30 and $60k
• 1% of the addicts contribute 35% of the visits
• 72% are passers-by, while only 27% are regular users
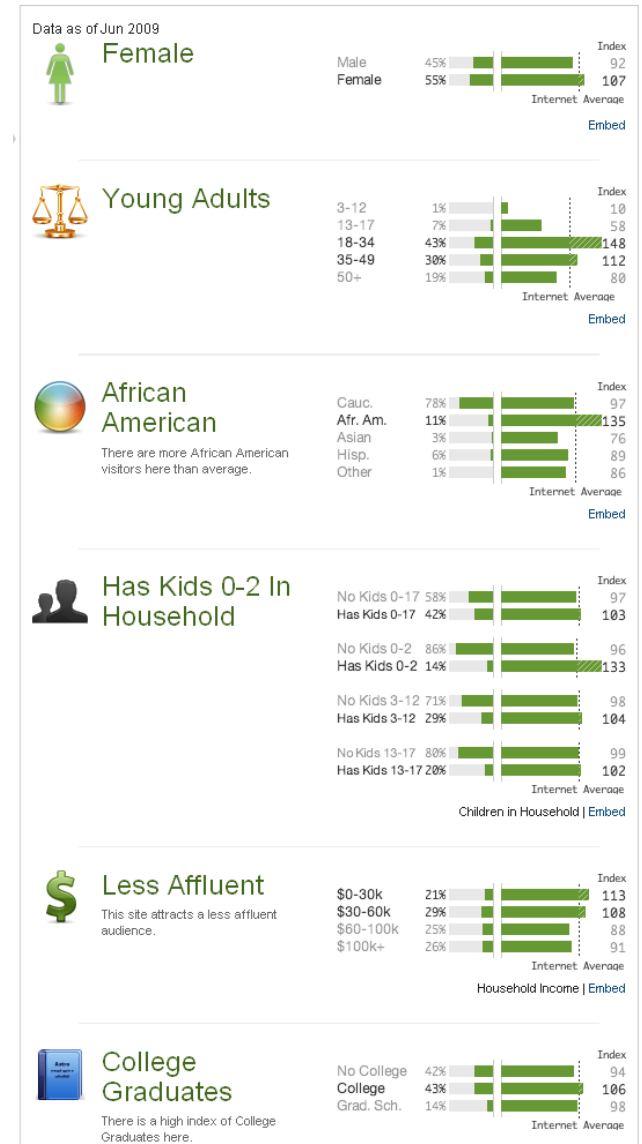
How Our Study Was Conducted

To conduct this study, we randomly sampled the public timeline Monday through Friday, every 30 minutes from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm for two weeks (10 days in total). Therefore, we took 200 samples from the timeline (in English) each day for a total sample data set of 2,000 points (or tweets).

The tweets were then categorized into six areas to the right.

Now, if there were any tweets that could fit **into** more than one category (which was rare), if it started with "@", we deemed it as conversational, even if it was a news item or self-promotion.

News

Any sort of main stream news that you might find on your national news stations such as CNN, Fox or others. This did not include tech news or social media news that you might find on TechCrunch or Mashable.

Spam

These are the tweets such as "See how I got 3,000 followers in one day" type of tweets.

Self-Promotion

These are typical corporate tweets about products, services, or "Twitter only" promos.

Pointless Babble

These are the "I am eating a sandwich now" tweets.

Conversational

These are tweets that go back and forth between folks, almost in an instant message fashion, as well as tweets that try to engage followers in conversation, such as questions or polls.

Pass-Along Value

These are any tweets with an "RT" in it.
Now, if there were any tweets that could fit **into** more than one category (which was rare), if it started with "@", we deemed it as conversational, even if it was a news item or self-promotion.

The Results

The results were interesting, and not in the order that we anticipated. For instance, we thought that both Spam and Self-Promotion percentages would be much higher. We were also surprised how close Conversational was to being in the top percentage position. We would venture to guess that if this study were conducted for a longer period of time, Conversational and Pointless Babble would likely trade places back and forth, and ultimately even out.

What's also interesting is that Pass-Along Value ranks 3rd in usage, albeit a far distance from the number one or two usage categories.

Also, we thought the News category would have more weight than dead last, since this seems to be contrary to Twitter's new position of being the premier source of news and events.

Self-promotion was also less than expected at 5.85% of all tweets. This may be enlightening to some folks, as there appears to be a flurry of companies and businesses joining Twitter to promote products and services.

Total News	72	3.60%
Total Spam	75	3.75%
Total Self promotion	117	5.85%
Total Pointless Babble	811	40.55%
Total Conversational	751	37.55%
Total Pass along value	174	8.70%
	2000	100.00%

- Winner -
"Pointless Babble"

2nd "Conversational"

3rd "Pass-Along Value"

The Results

Tweets by Time of Day

The chart below indicates from our data what times of the day you might expect certain types of tweets. What was interesting to us was that the Pass-along value tweets were most prevalent at 11:30a CST, with another spike between 4:00 and 4:30p CST. The highest tweets are highlighted for each category.

By Time of Day	11:00	11:30	1:30	2:00	2:30	3:00	3:30	4:00	4:30	5:00	
News	9	7	5	11	9	5	8	7	5	6	72
Spam	9	7	10	4	4	10	7	8	6	10	75
Self promotion	14	12	11	15	13	11	13	6	12	10	117
Pointless Babble	71	78	79	82	78	96	88	85	73	81	811
Conversational	76	71	76	72	84	66	66	73	84	83	751
Pass along value	21	25	19	16	12	12	18	21	20	10	174
Totals	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	2000

The Results

Tweets by Day of Week

The chart below creates and interesting correlation between the type of tweet and what day of the week in tends to occur more frequently. In this chart, we highlighted the highest occurrence of tweets for the day of the week. So for example, re-tweets happen most often on Mondays, while news tweets occur most often on Tuesdays. The category with the largest gap between the highest occurrence and the second-highest occurrence was self-promotion, where the highest occurrence was 8.5% of the tweets on Wednesdays, and the second-highest occurrence at 6.25% on Tuesdays.

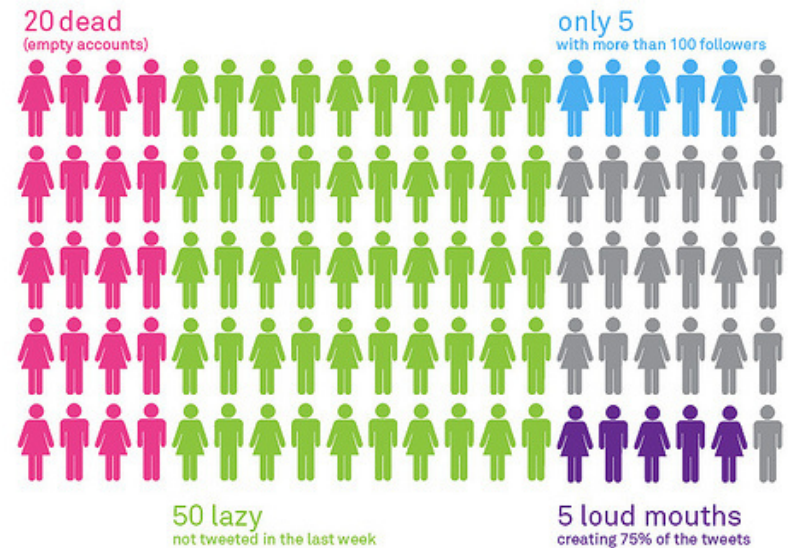| By Day of Week		News	Spam	SP	Babble	Conv	Pass Along
Monday		10	18	22	161	148	41
	% for day	2.500%	4.500%	5.500%	40.250%	37.000%	10.250%
Tuesday		21	15	25	155	159	25
	% for day	5.250%	3.750%	6.250%	38.750%	39.750%	6.250%
Wednesday		14	9	34	160	145	38
	% for day	3.500%	2.250%	8.500%	40.000%	36.250%	9.500%
Thursday		12	19	15	170	149	35
	% for day	3.000%	4.750%	3.750%	42.500%	37.250%	8.750%
Friday		15	14	21	165	150	35
	% for day	3.750%	3.500%	5.250%	41.250%	37.500%	8.750%

If Only 100 People Were on Twitter

Gizmodo
August 4, 2009

Gizmodo recently published a blog post "If Only 100 People Were on Twitter" and what it would look like. The data visualization was done by Dave MCandless. What stands out here is the "5 loud mouths", or 5% of the folks who contribute 75% of the tweets.

Let's Not Get Too Excited...
If the Twitter community was 100 people...

20 dead
(empty accounts)

only 5
with more than 100 followers

50 lazy
not tweeted in the last week

5 loud mouths
creating 75% of the tweets

David McCandless // www.visualizedthebook.com // v1.2   source: sysomos.com/insidetwitter/ [via rohitbhargava.typepad.com]

Source: http://gizmodo.com/5330049/if-only-100-people-were-in-twitter

Other Studies

Best Time to Tweet for Maximum Exposure

Gary McCaffrey
March 19, 2009

According to Internet marketing expert, Gary McCaffrey, he says he received the most referrals from Twitter between 1:00 and 2:00p PST, but also said you would get the highest chance of getting exposure between 9:00a and 3:00p. He even shares his referral traffic:

1.	00:00	7,685
2.	01:00	7,473
3.	02:00	7,902
4.	03:00	8,387
5.	04:00	9,598
6.	05:00	11,751
7.	06:00	13,450
8.	07:00	14,387
9.	08:00	14,348
10.	09:00	14,867
11.	10:00	15,088
12.	11:00	14,957
13.	12:00	14,738
14.	13:00	15,037
15.	14:00	14,564
16.	15:00	13,376
17.	16:00	13,080
18.	17:00	12,337
19.	18:00	12,699
20.	19:00	12,684
21.	20:00	12,236
22.	21:00	10,243
23.	22:00	8,335
24.	23:00	7,735

Why Teens Aren't Using Twitter

TechCrunch

July 13, 2009

Matthew Robson, a 15-year old intern at Morgan Stanley, wrote an interesting report on why Twitter is not the hot new thing in high school. His answer: it's not safe.
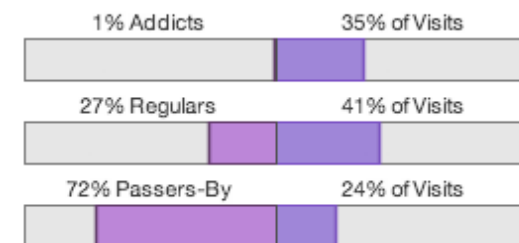
Teens like Facebook and MySpace because they have the ability to select who they want to connect to, who they want to share emails, screen names and phone numbers with. Twitter is not closed in the same manner. Anyone can follow your status updates.

He also mentioned (which was interesting), that Twitter is also seen as "expensive" to keep up with. Their parents usually pay the phone bills, and are not willing to pony up for unlimited texting. Therefore, they would rather send texts to friends who will actually respond, versus sending texts to update a Twitter status where they have no idea who will read or reply to it.

He goes on to say that Facebook has a more dedicated community than Twitter, and he's right. Just comparing Quantcast data between the two social networking sites, you can see that Facebook has 12X the number of "addicts" compared to Twitter, and 2X more regular visitors. Also, notice that 72% of people are "passers-by" compared to half that on Facebook.
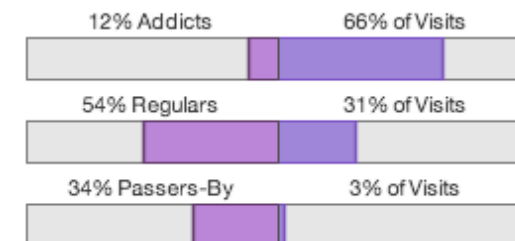
Twitter

Traffic Frequency ⑦

1% Addicts	35% of Visits
27% Regulars	41% of Visits
72% Passers-By	24% of Visits

Facebook

Traffic Frequency ⑦

12% Addicts	66% of Visits
54% Regulars	31% of Visits
34% Passers-By	3% of Visits

Source: http://quantcast.com

Try This

So There is a lot of "Babble" – What Can We Do About It?

One of our favorite tools we are currently beta testing is called Philtro (http://philtro.com). Philtro will take your unruly Tweets and narrow them down to what you actually care about. Most of us are busy professionals, so we don't necessarily have all day to spend on social media outlets, so wouldn't it be nice if you could log into your account, and see the Tweets you most care about for the day? They have a complex algorithm that will show the tweets that most interest you based on what you "thumb up" or "thumb down". It primarily looks at the content of the tweet, so even if you "thumb down" a friend, that doesn't mean you are permanently filtering them out – just that type of tweet.

One of the other problems with most of the apps out there is that they will only capture your tweets in a short window. This means that if there was a really good tweet, you can easily miss it if you are not continuously on top of it. Philtro will also be solving this problem in the upcoming weeks.

intro   take a tour   leaderboard   about   contact   blog

Philtro
Sign up for our beta

If you've got an unruly Twitter feed, we've got your back.

Philtro lets you **rate tweets** so you can find the most interesting, relevant tweets first. **It's like a noise filter for your Twitter account.**

Join the beta:

Email

Submit   Don't worry, we won't spam you.

Already a member? *lucky you.*

Email

Login   Forgot Password?

Sign in with Twitter

feedback

Copyright © 2009 Philtro, Inc. All rights reserved. — feedback@philtro.com

Source: http://philtro.com

Conclusion

Now What?

As Twitter continues to evolve, not only as a brand but from a user's perspective, it is likely that the usage patterns will change. We did not predict that Conversational would be as high as it was, or that Self-Promotion was going to be as low as it was.

Pear Analytics will be publishing new data quarterly in an attempt to identify and assess new trends in Twitter usage.

What We Do

Pear Analytics is a San Antonio-based products and services firm that specializes in marketing analytics, insights and intelligence. They have a variety of national clients in several industries including healthcare, technology, education, manufacturing and more where they consult them with search engine optimization and paid search strategies, marketing performance measurement and web-based tool development. Their current product is the Website Analyzer, a free SEO analysis tool for website owners who need non-technical instructions on how to improve their website for search engines. For more information, please visit www.pearanalytics.com.

For inquiries, please contact Ryan Kelly, ryan@pearanalytics.com.