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TalkToChange and InSites Consulting launch the 'Ultimate Twitter Study'

TalkToChange and InSites Consulting launched the Ultimate Twitter Study. The aim of this study is to map the profile, use and motivation of Twitter users. Participants are able to register on www.ultimatetwitterstudy.com and receive a question via Twitter every day. The responses can be followed live on the site. The first results show that Twitter = knowledge, up-to-date, quick, short, open, user-friendly and personal branding. The study will be wrapped up towards the end of June.

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A lot of studies focus on the demographic data relating to social media users, but few studies focus on the use of Twitter. The aim of this study is to map, for the first time, the profile, use and motivation of Twitterers. The study comprises a qualitative and quantitative part. In the qualitative part the use, motivations and motives of twitterers are studied. The second phase comprises a quantitative part which builds on the qualitative part, in which the demographic data of twitterers and their followers are studied. There is also a strong focus on frequency of usage, reasons of usage (private v. professional) and mobile usage.

The study started on 5 May. The qualitative part runs to the end of May, and the study will be wrapped up towards the end of June.

Tom De Ruyck (Senior ForwaR&D Lab Consultant): *"There is a lot of buzz surrounding Twitter: Obama used the medium in his election campaign, celebrities such as Oprah create accounts and start sending tweets around the world and brands try to use the tool to enter into a dialogue with their consumers. A hype in other words, but few people really know how to handle the medium and what users are looking for in terms of content. We shouldn't forget that in spite of everything, Twitter is still a niche application when you compare it to Facebook for instance. On the other hand we all know how quickly this can change. And that is why we are conducting this big Twitter study now."*

Who is taking part and what do participants need to do?

Anyone is able to take part in the study by following the different steps on www.ultimatetwitterstudy.com. Every working day a new question is launched via a tweet with a hash tag: #TwitterStudyQ (question number).

The answers can be viewed live on the website. The day after the question people tweet, and feedback is posted with the first analysis results based on the collected tweets!

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Based on the first 2 questions, this is the summary of the first results.

What do Twitterers associate with Twitter?

'What are you doing?', the question Twitter constantly asks us is wrong. It should be 'What do you want to share?'. It is about knowledge and staying up-to-date, not about status updates. A summary of all associations resulted in this description of Twitter:

"a social network of friends and/or business contacts with whom you can share and discover interesting, exciting, inspiring or funny news very quickly".

What is the significance of Twitter in the lives of people?

The driving factors behind Twitter's success are:

- the ease with which an account can be created;
- the user-friendliness of the platform;
- the world-wide reach without boundaries;

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- the fact that it is a tool where people can easily share their opinion;
- the high speed at which everything happens.

Twitter is seen as a medium to stay up-to-date about a specific topic, to know what is happening NOW. It is also seen as a kind of collective brain, an archive of our thoughts or old news, about both general and specific topics. Users appreciate the fact that updates can be short (or have to be short) and that thoughts, news and information are shared very quickly.

'Tweeps' (as people on Twitter are called by the community) share their tweets with people they know and are like-minded. Nobody is really worried about the 'lurkers'. The openness and transparency of conversation (also via search) is why Twitter is a great tool, they say.

Twitter is the ultimate '(personal) branding' channel, both professionally (what do you know, what customers or conferences do you visit, what books are you reading, ...) and privately (what parties do you go to, what music do you listen to, what are your fun/funny/intelligent opinions).

Examples of Tweets in the study

"Twitter = my sappy little brain in 140 characters or less"

"Twitter = a giant, world-wide refrigerator that anyone can read, covered in 140-character magnet-notes about nearly anything"

"Twitter = a way of quickly tapping into new trends and relevant news, before the blogosphere starts publishing it"

"Twitter = my virtual water cooler: interaction with professional colleagues, helpful advice with links, news & gossip"

Tom De Ruyck (Senior ForwaR&D Lab Consultant): *"A couple of years ago everyone suddenly had a blog to share their personal thoughts with friends/family and the rest of the world. Today we see that these kinds of blogs are disappearing one by one. It takes several hours a day to update this kind of blog for only a handful of readers. The big blogs with several tens of thousands of readers will continue to exist and are updated by a professional team of online journalists. Twitter is a new phenomenon in the making, sharing highly personal thoughts in 140 characters from anywhere you want and without too much effort. In other words, Microblogging is the new, more efficient version of the amateur blog for users."*



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