

PRESS RELEASE

Africa outstrips US and UK in using Twitter for political conversations

Twitter is 'coming of age' in Africa with the platform being widely used for political debate. Analysis by Portland found that almost 1 in 10 of the most popular African hashtags in 2015 related to political issues and politicians, compared to 2 per cent of hashtags in the US and UK. The top political hashtag in Africa was focused on the highest profile election on the continent last year - #NigeriaDecides.

Portland, a London-based integrated communications agency, analysed 1.6 billion geo-located tweets and the top 5,000 hashtags on the continent, as part of our third ["How Africa Tweets" report](#). The main findings of the report are:

- Although tweets about showbiz and entertainment dominated the conversation last year, representing over 20 per cent of all hashtags, discussion around politics has grown to 10 per cent. Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Burundi and Egypt were the most active in these political conversations. The report also found that interest in politics transcends national borders. For example, hashtags about the Nigerian Presidential Elections and strife in Burundi were among some of the most popular and widespread hashtags across Africa.
- English is by far the most dominant language on Twitter in Africa. This lingua franca has helped bridge national and cultural barriers across the continent, providing Twitter conversations with a wider reach than those using conventional media. Of the top 5,000 hashtags that we analysed, 77% were tweeted in English. Other top languages like Arabic and French were tweeted significantly less – only 7% and 4% respectively.
- Twitter in Africa is used distinctly less for commercial campaigns than in other parts of the world. Commercial hashtags (such as brand names and promotional offers) are 25 times less prominent in Africa than in the USA, for example.
- Egypt tweets the most out of any country in Africa, with 28% of all geolocated Twitter volume (amounting to 500 million tweets). Nigeria (360 million geolocated tweets), South Africa (325 million geolocated tweets), Kenya (125 million geolocated tweets) and Ghana (70 million geolocated tweets) round out the top five tweeting African countries. Overall, there were 1.86 billion geolocated tweets in Africa in 2015 – a 34-fold increase from our initial research in 2012.

"Our previous studies showed that Twitter in Africa was much more of a space for social interaction or frivolous banter. This study, our third, demonstrates that the platform is coming of age with the prevalence of serious debate about politics and government," says Mark Flanagan, Portland's Senior Partner for Content and Digital Strategy.

"Excitingly, our report also hints at the coming together of Africans across boundaries to comment on and discuss common issues. How to successfully engage with these emerging pan-African online communities represents a challenge for all brands and organisations seeking to build their presence in this space," added Allan Kamau, who leads Portland's Nairobi office.

On top of this data, the report consists of 12 case studies, which explore diverse topics such as how Twitter relates to terrorism in Africa, the Ebola response, economic development and more. To explore these case studies and our interactive infographic please visit www.HowAfricaTweets.com

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Notes to the Editor

Portland is a fast-growing communications and public affairs consultancy based in London, with offices in New York, Washington, DC, Doha and Nairobi. Portland has a speciality and focus on media and digital campaigns in Africa. In publishing its third “How Africa Tweets” report, Portland leads the way in knowledge of the digital landscape in Africa.

To collect the data in this report, Portland utilised the social media analysis tool Sysomos. From this tool, Portland collected the top 5,000 hashtags from Africa in 2015, which represented more than 1.6 billion geolocated tweets. When a tweet is geolocated, it means that the Twitter user has allowed his or her location to be shown on Twitter. Some users disable their location on Twitter and therefore cannot be geolocated.

Once the top 5,000 hashtags were collected, Portland hand-coded each one to understand what language it was in and what the hashtag was about. From there, Portland was able to calculate the statistics mentioned in this report.

Portland was unable to collect information on South Sudan and Republic of Congo, due to lack of data on social media.

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Top five themes of hashtags around the world

