

The social phenomenon that is Black Twitter

 By [JP Kloppers](#)

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Understanding this growing and influential virtual community presents a unique opportunity for brands in South Africa wanting to engage more effectively with their customer base.

If the term '[Black Twitter](#)' leaves you scratching your head, you're not alone. Although this influential online community's roots date back around seven or eight years, many people remain unfamiliar. For businesses that remain out of the loop, an important brand engagement and market opportunity may be missed. So – what is 'Black Twitter' and why is it important for brands to actively engage with this growing but often overlooked community?



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Black Twitter – the basics

Essentially, Black Twitter refers to a dynamic, multifaceted and closely networked online community whose users engage with issues of interest to the black community. Important to note is that Black Twitter does not simply refer to black users of Twitter. Rather, it refers to a distinct, vibrant and vocal collective, the users of which drive conversation around everything from issues of social justice and cultural identity to trends in pop-culture and entertainment. The community traces its roots to the US, but has since spread to South Africa, which now has a large and thriving Black Twitter base.

What does this mean for SA brands looking to grow their reach?

For businesses looking to engage with their users directly, this influential – and active – online community presents a huge opportunity. When one considers the maximum potential reach for engagement – a measure quantifiable via a metric known as Opportunity to See (OTS) – carries significant influence among Black Twitter, with a potential OTS of 75 million.

What's hot on this people-driven platform?

Although a diverse and dynamic range of themes circulate on the platform, entertainment is often a hot-button issue, as are trends from pop-culture. Hashtags connected to local TV programmes, for example, often rank among the most widely used, spiking particularly as users Tweet their thoughts while watching or listening to their favourite shows. For brands operating in this arena, such high levels of user engagement present a distinct opportunity. The right content and affiliation can spark with and engage an already active and interested audience – one keen on sharing content and participating in

discussions around popular themes.

High-profile brand ambassadors can play a key role in this regard; their participation in campaigns and the associated pop-culture dialogues often dramatically boosts brand engagement. Celeb Tweets not only provide popular rallying points, but leverage the power of pre-existing networks when they become widely shared.

Related is the power of brand sponsorships – particularly of events with high degrees of local media coverage. When associated with programmes or events already generating high levels of viewer enthusiasm and social media engagement, such sponsorships can be used to enhance a brand's image and increase positive consumer sentiment.

An inspired online opportunity

For brands looking to grow their relevance, connect directly with their user base and increase online engagement, the social media phenomenon that is Black Twitter presents a unique opportunity. Relevant content and positive association with themes trending on the pop-culture scene can mean increased brand engagement and enhanced image. Tweets by influential brand ambassadors can also be key rallying points and sources of widely shared content – particularly for brands that operate within the entertainment arena.

Content in official languages other than English is prominent, with isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho all well represented.

This thriving online community provides a great engagement opportunity for brands in South Africa providing the perfect platform to have meaningful conversations that go beyond just advertising and sponsorship.

ABOUT JP KLOPPERS

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