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TWITTER
Tweets
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&
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It's not **OVER** 'til the **FAT LADY** **tweets**

When we first started using email in the then Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes (around the mid-90s), we used to have some fiery exchanges leading to shattered work relationships and very hurt feelings. The situation required serious discussion about why we spoke via our fingers in this new and immediate medium in ways we never would have face to face or via letters. And then we drafted a policy: certain kinds of statements (if we ever wanted to look each other in the eye again) were off limits; and we adopted the practice of either taking a very deep and long breath before firing off a reply or banging down your immediate thoughts, but not sending until you'd regrouped and thought again about the impact of your words.

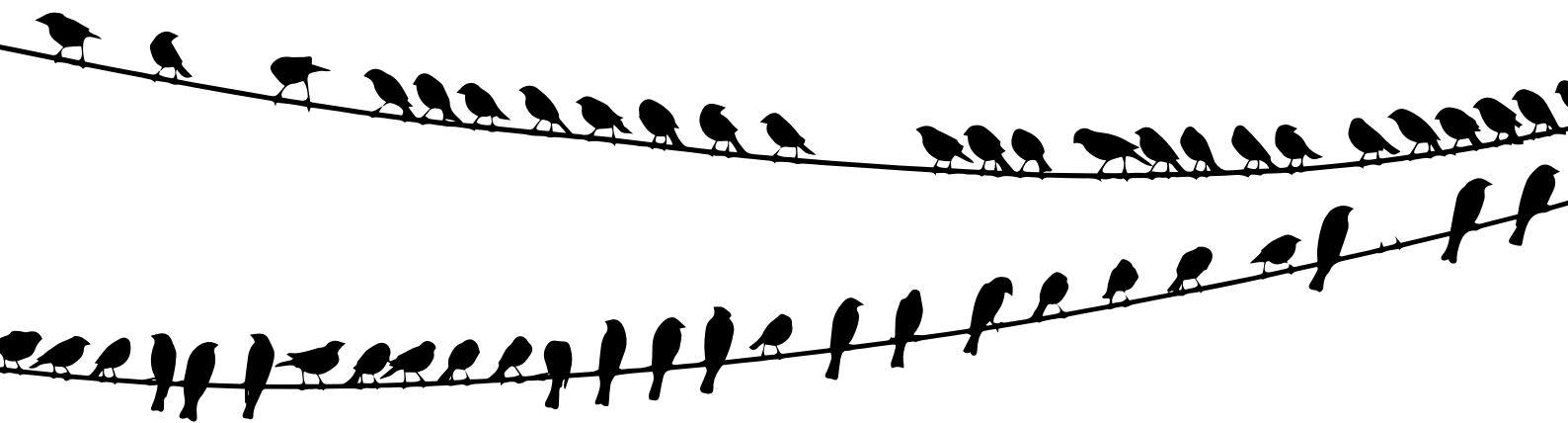
We no longer have email wars at work. Most curious. How did this happen? Did we just simply grow into the medium figuring out both its possibilities and its drawbacks? How did we go from stated policy to never really talking about it at all?

Along comes a new, immediate, fascinating vehicle for expression and once again we're in the wars, talking in intemperate tones, flaming our friends and enemies. But this one goes wider and deeper and causes more damage. It also has become quite an extraordinary vehicle not just for self-expression but for actually doing journalism. And it's not just the province of the new, brave youngsters coming into newsrooms as digital natives, as Peter Verweij and Elvira van Noort show, lots of South African journalists who have already made it in old media have made the transition to the new very smoothly and very fast.

Twitter is loved – and hated. And therefore is worth thinking about as a tool for journalism and as a mechanism that allows for different kinds of audiences to get different kinds of information and to spread it through circles upon circles of people with phones.

We thought we'd devote an edition of RJR Alive to considerations of Twitter, looking at the Twars but also examining how it's changing journalism and politics.

Anthea Garman, Editor



PLURALISM & OPENNESS are key in the SA Twitter network

By Peter Verweij and Elvira van Noort

Twitter has changed the way in which journalists do their work – they need a new set of skills to stay relevant in their field. “If you as a journalist don’t use it, you do yourself a disservice as news breaks on Twitter, radio, television, newspaper – in that order”, argues Radio702 presenter Aki Anastasiou. South African freelance journalist and avid Twitter user Gus Silber adds that “hardly any major news event these days goes unaccompanied by analysis of what people are saying about it on Twitter”. It is clear that Twitter has changed their news routine and their relationship with the public.

While Anastasiou and Silber embraced the social medium, other journalists are struggling to keep up with its pace. The immediacy, the direct connection with the audience and the ability to tell a story in 140 characters ask for an updated news routine, or even a professional transformation. According to Silber “media houses need journalists who are capable of filtering information and spreading both news and commentary that is easy to digest.” This switch from a more traditional mindset to publishing online calls for a set of added reporting skills. These should include the ability to be concise but detailed, to be able to describe emotions and observations, to keep the facts straight and, last but not least, to make sure each tweet is a follow-up on the previous message so that the audience can keep track of the unfolding story. It’s digital storytelling with many challenges.

“Twitter is where people get their breaking news, it is fascinating to see how it has changed the way we do journalism” – Aki Anastasiou

Individualisation

During the Magistrate's Court hearing of Paralympian sprint runner Oscar Pistorius' bail application (the double-leg amputee was arrested on suspicions of murdering his model girl friend), Twitter became the only direct news source because cameras and microphones were not allowed in the courtroom. The news had to be spread in 140-character tweets, there was no other way of reporting. EyeWitnessNews (EWN) reporter Barry Bateman was live-tweeting from the court room. His followers on Twitter grew from 17.249 on February 15 to 122.743 on February 21. His mentions shot up to 89.592.

It's obvious from these numbers that Bateman became an important source on Twitter as he was broadcasting the latest news from the court room and was able to explain to the public what was going on. He showed that Twitter gives individual journalists a strong platform and that the quality of reporting is not related to the reputation of a media house: the journalist is the brand.

Therefore, one could argue that Twitter drives individualisation among journalists, implying that in public debates the role of the media could decrease in favour of the increasing role of individual journalists who have the reporting skills to tell a story on Twitter.

Alarm bell

Another important individual in shaping the public debate about Pistorius was Anastasiou. He was the second South African journalist to tweet about Pistorius' arrest and the first one to tweet about it in English. “With the Pistorius case the pace was so quick you could easily get lost in the conversation”, says Anastasiou. He adds that “it's like having your finger on the button of a nuclear missile, if it goes wrong it goes horribly wrong... and you can't stop the missile!”

The proverbial nuclear missile led to a total of 1,306,313 tweets with the hashtag #OscarPistorius in the 7 days following Pistorius' arrest on 14 February 2013. That equals 130 tweets per minute. It is a perfect example of the ‘alarm bell’ concept (Hermida, 2009). The Twitter alarm bell goes off after the first tweet and journalists dive into the breaking news story.

While journalists report on the case, often live from the court room, the public interacts on Twitter by re-tweeting, adding comments and asking questions. From the tweets with hashtag #OscarPistorius it's obvious that Twitter has transformed the classical model of mass communication from a sender-receiver model with a two-step flow (Baran, 2011) to We the Media (Gillmor, 2004). The tool embraces all we-media aspects, including interactivity and crowd sourcing, in which the journalists and the public engage with the news.

This room for public engagement is a given with digital media in general (from online newspapers and blogs to social media) and transforms the process of communication, making it more open, pluralistic and democratic. Ferial Haffajee, editor of the City Press, follows that practice, saying she uses Twitter to not only break news but also “float opinions, fine tune editorial thinking [and] to take the pulse of a section of our reading public”.

Both Hermida's ideas about Twitter as an alarm bell and the transformed classical model of mass communication opens up a new more open, pluralistic and democratic era for journalism (Verweij, 2010). We can visualise this transformation with a social network analysis of 500 South African journalists on Twitter.

Social network analysis

A social network analysis gives an impression of the openness, transparency and pluralism of the public debates and the role of journalists in those debates. Twitter gives a good indication of their involvement and gives us a network to analyse. From the perspective of democratic decision-making, it would be important for this Twitter network to be pluralistic. After all, if the network is closed and in the hand of an elite the public debate could, possibly, be completely controlled by that elite.

We used two open-source tools to analyse 500 tweeting South African journalists (for a Twitter list of 500 South African journalists, see <http://hacks.mediahack.co.za>): Gephi and NodeXL. Both resulted in a network graph and centrality measures such as In-Degree. In-Degree lists the number of followers a journalist has on Twitter and could be interpreted as being an indicator of the importance of the journalist within the network. Simply said: the more followers



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the higher the journalists' authority in the network.

Our data, from August 2012, showed the following Top 20 ranking on authority. See Table 1.

As a (aspiring) journalist it is interesting to follow the Top 20 people, as they are at the heart of the online public debate. Journalists are sources of news, following each other is simply following sources and finding news. Figure 1 is a visualisation of the Top 20.

We also found that the network of 500 journalists is not closely connected: the individuals share only 9% of possible connections between each other. However, the majority of individuals within the network can easily be contacted in less than two steps. Meaning that contacting a person is possible via another person who is in between.

Open and poly-centred

The Mail & Guardian (M&G) is well-represented in the Top 20, their position makes them leading in the Twitter network of 500 journalists in South Africa. This means that they are able to influence the public debate. However, the number one spot in the Top 20 is reserved for Haffajee and the EWN rank highly as well. Finally, a number of freelance journalists have a similar high position. There is no elite, the South African Twitter network can be characterized as open and poly-centred. The openness and pluralism in the Twitter network are important prerequisites for shaping public debate and in the end democratic decision-making.

Information Bill

The importance of this role of social networks like Twitter is growing in a situation where the South African government is trying to control the public debates through their "Protection of State Information Bill". The traditional media are easy to control, since they are centralised – controlling these media is, therefore, equal to controlling the source. Social media, however, are decentralised and because of that far more difficult to control by governments. Shutting down social, 'we-media', is almost impossible.

"Twitter gets information out so quickly, it is much harder to control", says Stephen Grootes of Radio 702. "This means that facts get into the public domain before any gatekeeper, whether an editor or otherwise, can stop it. This has some risks but is generally a very positive development. Information wants to be free, Twitter allows for that and keeps it cheap!"

Whether this positive outlook on Twitter and the public debate is enough to escape the growing control of the South African government and their Information Bill remains to be seen.

	Twitter Name	Journalist	In-Degree	Medium
1	Ferialhaffajee	Ferial Haffajee	361	City Press
2	Nicdawes	Nic Dawes	327	Mail & Guardian
3	Gussilber	Gus Silber	298	Freelance
4	Mandywiener	Mandy Wiener	288	EWN
5	Phillipdewet	Philip de Wet	269	Mail & Guardian
6	Stephengrootes	Stephen Grootes	268	EWN
7	Maxdupreez	Max du Preez	264	Freelance
8	Hartleyr	Ray Hartley	262	Sunday Times
9	Adriaanbasson	Adriaan Basson	234	City Press
10	702johnrobbie	John Robbie	227	Radio 702
11	Bruceps	Peter Bruce	227	Business Day
12	Verashni	Verashni Pillay	217	Mail & Guardian
13	Mandyldehaal	Mandy de Waal	217	Daily Maverick
14	Antonharber	Anton Harber	217	Freelance
15	Carienduplessis	Carie du Plessis	214	City Press
16	Artzgee	Arthur Goldstuck	213	Freelance
17	Guyberger	Guy Berger	211	Personal
18	Shapshak	Toby Shapshak	207	Stuff
19	Akianastasiou	Aki Anastasiou	205	Radio 702
20	Brankobrkc	Branko Brkic	205	Daily Maverick

TABLE 1: Top 20 Journalists on Twitter by In-Degree (Authority)

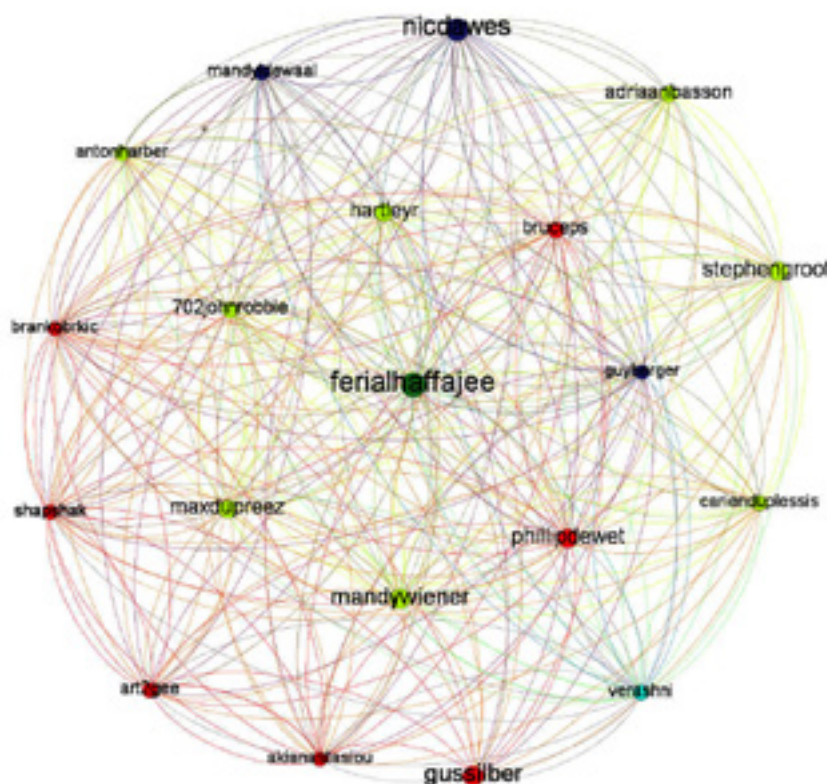


FIGURE 1: Visualisation of Top 20 Journalists on Twitter by In-Degree (Authority)

You can read the full paper titled "Journalists' twitter networks, public debates and relationships in South Africa" in Digital Journalism (Taylor & Francis, 2014, volume 2, issue 1). Please visit <http://goo.gl/Yk6c7D>

Twitter

& the Oscar Pistorius Trial

By Katy Scott

The Twittersphere provides space for everything from interpersonal communication to the broadcasting of breaking events. How then are South African journalists making use of this medium when live tweeting from the Oscar Pistorius murder trial? To what extent are they adapting, adjusting or extending their traditional journalistic practices to this online platform? How are they navigating and negotiating their roles in this interactive space? This article offers some answers to these questions.

Journalism on Twitter, as Hermida (2010) says, has become “ambient”, ubiquitous, often disjointed, and a collective effort involving the audience and journalists alike. As Singer (2005) found with journalists who blog (j-bloggers), Larosa, Lewis and Holton (2012) found tweeting journalists (j-tweeters) to be adapting professional norms and practices to the evolving norms and practices of Twitter while continuing to think in terms of their professional role as information providers. Journalists then “normalise” new media platforms by extending and applying existing journalistic practices and values to them (Hermida, 2010). But what of journalists live tweeting from the court room?

My study focused on the live tweets of five of the most-followed South African journalists covering the trial. These journalists are the most relevant for the study as a high number of followers indicate both a public interest in the journalist as well as the amount of people being reached through their tweets. The question then becomes, do their live tweets show evidence of journalistic commitments to objectivity, accountability and gatekeeping?

I conducted a content analysis of the live tweets from my sample of journalists and coded each tweet over the period of a week for its primary purpose. These codes were derived from the categories devised by Larosa et al. (2012) and Artwick (2013) and were modified to correspond to my research question. Categories included:

- Reporting or communicating information
- Replies and Responses
- Retweets
- Primary Opinion
- Secondary Opinion.

In the initial coding it became clear that the journalists were adhering to journalistic norms of objectivity with just over 80% of the 2422 tweets primarily communicating information from the trial. These types of tweets mainly included direct quotes from the court proceedings such as:



#OscarTrial Nel: I am saying she wanted to leave and you weren't sleeping, you were both awake and there was an argument OP: That's not true – Debora Patta

Alternatively, summaries of what was being said or happening were given in order to paint a full picture for the journalist's followers:

#OscarPistorius again with his head in his hands at this wound reconstruction, appears to be blocking his ears with his thumbs – Charl du Plessis

It was evident that some journalists (such as Rebecca Davis) were more selective in their reporting of information, only choosing to quote or summarise the aspects of the court proceedings that carried the most impact:

Nel: "You saw how the bullet made the watermelon explode. You know that the same thing happened to Reeve's head." RS's mom June bows head – Rebecca Davis

The predominance of live tweets reporting or communicating information demonstrates how journalists on Twitter fulfil their traditional function of bearing witness to events by monitoring all that occurs. It is clear that the notion of journalism as a public service empowering and allowing for media consumers to be a part of the news prevails.

The journalists further took on their role of informant in their clarification and correction of facts and details concerning the trial. Many users approached the journalists with questions about the proceedings. The "@ mentions" tweeted by the journalists were therefore in direct response to these questions. These mentions made up just over 5% of the tweets coded, indicating that the journalists were accountable to their audiences.

The most common reply to followers was that of clarifying or correcting information. In such a case the journalist would expand on a previous tweet that a follower had questions about. Here is an example of such a response:

@barrybateman no chance of there being 5 shots and casing was disposed of? – Bronwen vdm

@bronwenvdm no. There are four bullet holes and spent casings all accounted for. – Barry Bateman

Along with answering queries and explaining the goings on, journalists were quick to admit and correct their mistakes that they were called out on by the public. This occurred when they were corrected by one of their followers and promptly apologised by replying to the follower:

"And then, and then, and then" Nel's channeling the chick at the Chinese take away place in Road Trip – Charl du Plessis

@CharlduPlessc "Dude, where's my car?" – David Dadic

@DavidDadic I stand corrected. It was "Dude, where's my car" not "Road Trip". #mortified – Charl du Plessis

Another response consisted of including the user's question or comment in the reply by quoting the tweet and prefixing it with "RT". Davis employed this technique quite a bit in order to make the discussion more public for the rest of her followers:

Both, actually! Thanks for the interest RT @andreapolis: @becsplanb Are you giving your opinion or reporting on the Oscar trial... – Rebecca Davis

While only a small amount of tweets were dedicated to replying and responding to the public, it is evident that in the case of journalists such as

Rebecca Davis and Charl du Plessis, significantly more time was spent responding than reporting. This could possibly be on account of the fact that they are less attached to the journalistic norms of the media institution that they work for. As Artwick (2013) and Hayes (2007) found journalists committing to the “brand” of their media organisation, so the practices of the other three journalists (Barry Bateman, Debora Patta and Karyn Maughan) seem to be adhering more to set institutional norms.

Such a commitment is evident in the way in which Maughan, for example, only retweeted the live tweets of fellow media sources to flesh out her feed of tweets in order to provide as full account of the intricacies of the trial as possible:

Retweeted by Karyn Maughan

#OscarTrial Nel - there is no blood spatter on the bed - only on the duvet - Nel asserting that its because the duvet was always on floor – Debora Patta

This need to control the dissemination of messages is in line with Larosa, Lewis and Holton’s (2012) findings that journalists working for major national newspapers, broadcasting networks or cable news channels generally appear to be changing their practices to a lesser extent.

Furthermore, journalists retweeted the thoughts and opinions of their followers that they found particular interesting or amusing such as in this instance:

Retweeted by Debora Patta

@Debora_Patta: #OscarTrial Suddenly Dixon joins Nel in being removed from the list of people Roux is sending Easter eggs to... – Mark Hicks

Similarly, journalists retweeted thoughts and statements mentioning them or directed at them that they felt needed highlighting:

Retweeted by Rebecca Davis

@becsplanb I put it to you that standing and walking on stumps is not the same. I challenge you to ride a bicycle vs standing on the bike – bmlw

It is evident that while journalists such as Maughan may not be opening the gates to non-professionals or encouraging public dialogue in her retweets, journalists such as Davis and du Plessis are actively doing so. The notion of journalist as the gatekeeper deciding what others should know is directly connected to the notion of a journalist needing to serve the information needs of a democratic society (Hayes et al., 2007). Through

simply retweeting other media elites and colleagues, information can only be communicated in a hierarchical manner.

However, through the retweets of public opinion, Davis and du Plessis demonstrate how journalists can communicate horizontally. By loosening their control over the news and allowing for dialogue to be generated, these two journalists found themselves participating in a discussion rather than acting as informants. The proceedings are therefore made sense of collectively through the opening up of conversations. Davis and du Plessis increased the visibility of their conversations and discussions by retweeting the tweets of their followers that

mentioned them directly, often replying in the same tweet. This allowed for a modest number of voices to contribute to the evolving dialogue.

The journalists further made sense of the proceedings by personally commenting and highlighting all that they found interesting or significant. In adding a human voice to the live tweets, journalists deviated from traditional norms of objectivity. Just under 10% of the live tweets contained opinion either primarily or as a secondary aspect. These numbers are much lower than the findings of Singer (2005) who found that 61% of blogs contained the expression of opinion and Larosa, Lewis and Holton (2012) who found 43%. However, the presence of opinion within live tweeting is interesting in that it reveals how even when reporting in real time, journalists have the potential to opine.

Tweets were coded as Primary Opinion if they conveyed a journalist’s judgment, stance or personal opinion on an aspect of the trial. With just under 2% of the tweets primarily offering opinions on the unfolding of events, it became clear that careful attention was paid to the expression of their opinions, particularly with journalists such as Bateman and Maughan. Tweets categorised as primary opinion were those directly commenting on the happenings in an opinionated manner without adding information about what was happening:

#OscarTrial ... and we’re back to what Pistorius “wanted” to do. BB – Barry Bateman

Stronger cases of opining can be seen in du Plessis’ tweets. 14% of his tweets opined making use of humour or witty commentary such as this one:

This trial hasn’t been a great promo for Silver



Katy Scott is a Media Theory and Practice Honours Student at the University of Cape Town. She is an aspiring journalist and holds the position of Deputy Editor of Varsity Newspaper, the official Newspaper of UCT. She is currently completing an internship at Street Talk TV while she finishes her studies.

Woods. Tiles that fall off, doors that jam in frame and locks that stick – Charl du Plessis

Davis further makes use of humour in her opinionated tweets with 16% of her tweets focusing primarily on conveying opinion. Davis personalised her tweets to a much greater extent, letting her followers in and treating them more as friends than as media consumers.

Shit Pistorius has a terrible memory. I mean I do too, but that's because I drink to excess. He claims he barely touches the stuff – Rebecca Davis

Tweets that primarily conveyed information but contained a secondary element of opinion were grouped as "Secondary Opinion". This category included tweets with certain word choices relaying opinion about the proceedings. For example here the verb "rips into" indicates an attack and could have easily been replaced by "questions":

Nel rips into #OscarPistorius for touching his eyes. He says his eyes are tired. Nel: why now? @eNCAnews – Karyn Maughan

Also in this category were tweets adding comments or judgments to the proceedings. Here the opinion is given that this piece of evidence is "bad" for Oscar Pistorius:

#OscarTrial This is bad for OP: the blood spatter indicates duvet was on floor and spilt when he carried Reeva as there is no spatter on bed – Debora Patta

Again du Plessis adds humour and wit to his tweets. He does not hesitate to add his opinion to what he is tweeting about especially if he can add comedic effect to all that is going on. In this example he makes use of a hashtag to contribute to the humour:

#OscarPistorius Day 4 of OP's cross-examination at the hands of Gerrie "California Tiger Salamander" Nel. #CosAnyAnimalWillDo – Charl du Plessis

Similarly, Davis adds her opinion in her reporting of information however with more of a sarcastic, biting emphasis. She takes less of a light-hearted approach than du Plessis by really getting her followers to understand the gravitas of what is being said or happening:

Pistorius: "I did not intend to kill Reeva or anyone else". But sadly that's what happens when you fire into an enclosed space – Rebecca Davis

While journalists are traditionally expected to hide their individual biases, the results of this study suggest that South African journalists do share their

own views when live tweeting in a professional capacity.

It is arguable that commentary and opinion can help foster critical discussions (Hayes et al., 2007). This is evident in the predominance of opinion in Davis and du Plessis' tweets and the consequent amount of feedback they received from their followers. In adjusting their practices to the personal and familiar nature of the medium, journalists decrease the distance between them and their audience.

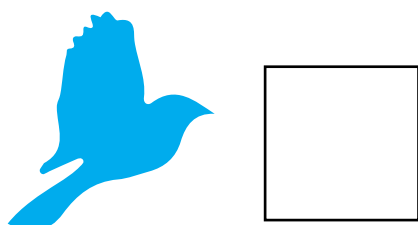
Through the expression of opinion and commentary accompanying the reporting, the opening of the gates to other voices, or the privileging of media sources, the engagement and horizontal discussion with users or the continuation of the vertical dissemination of information as well as the varying degrees of accountability of the journalist, it is evident that South African journalists are navigating and negotiating their roles as both reporters and contributors to the conversation.

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HOW OPPOSITION PARTIES **USED TWITTER** ON ELECTION DAY

By Dean Horwitz



The development of social networks such as Facebook and YouTube has propelled the internet into a new phase of development and interactivity. One of the fastest growing tools of the web is the social network Twitter. Twitter's heightened potential for viral messages combined with the ability to communicate and influence an audience that is far larger than one you would have reached through traditional media has made it a powerful tool for politicians and political parties (Smith, 2012; Parmlee and Bichard, 2012). Politicians, both in South African and abroad are turning to twitter to inform, mobilize, and respond to attacks and to engage with their supporters and opponents in a meaningful and direct way (Smith, 2012).

Twitter and politics entered into the mainstream as a result of Barack Obama's use of the platform and other social media tools to connect with his supporters, communicate ideas and fundraise (Hendriks and Denton, 2009 as cited in Parmlee and Bichard, 2012).

Twitter was first used in SA politics in the 2009 election; however its use was limited. The DA and Cope used the platform as a one-way information sharing platform. During the election the DA were the only opposition party that maintained a social media team and whose leaders were active on Twitter with DA leader Helen Zille using Twitter during the election to inform her followers of her movements on the campaign trail and on Election Day (Bankole et al, 2010; Nielsen, 2009).

Since then South African opposition parties have moved to Twitter in an attempt to engage their followers and supporters.

Their tweets include a mixture of political statements and views alongside personal interactions and stories from their daily lives (Smith, 2012; Findlay, 2012).

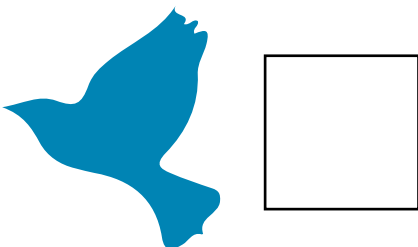
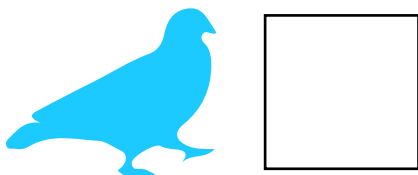
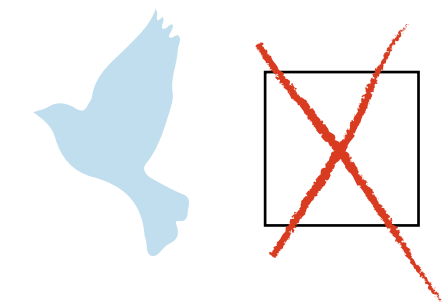
Researchers have investigated the rise of online campaigning and Twitter in particular and linked that to the decline in the effectiveness of traditional campaigning methods like Television adverts. However, at this early stage of Twitter campaigning several researchers have found links between offline popular traditional media and Twitter (e.g. Hong and Nadler, 2012)

Research has also looked at whether or not Twitter can be used for discussion and debate. There are two conflicting views on this subject. The one view is that Twitter serves as means of conversation, political deliberation and debate (Honeycutt and Herring as cited in Tumasjan et al) while the other view holds that Twitter is being used as a one way communications and broadcasting platform which does not have the ability to mobilise the electorate (Small, 2010).

The majority of research around Twitter and politics lies in its effectiveness during an election. Researchers have studied how Twitter is used as a space to report intimidation, vote rigging, violence and other irregularities as well as the ways in which ordinary citizens are using Twitter on Election Day (Rotberg and Aker, 2013; Davis, 2013).

The research for this article was conducted on Election Day and started in the morning before the polls opened and ended once the polls closed. The researcher monitored Twitter as the day progressed and tracked conversations, debates and trends. At the close of the day, the researcher analysed the data that was monitored and tracked and answered the key research questions.

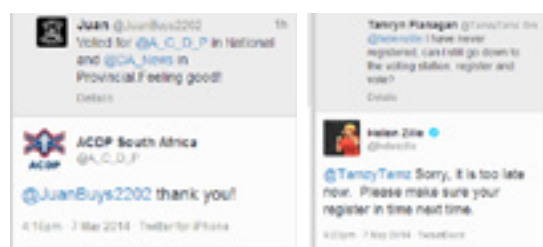
The research was conducted through the use of a Twitter program called Tweetdeck.



The researcher observed several opposition accounts including those of the DA, Agang, EFF and COPE. The Twitter accounts of party leaders Helen Zille, Mamphela Ramphele and Bantu Holomisa were also observed. The researcher also studied the tweets that they posted as well as the way in which they responded to queries and tweets from ordinary citizens and other opposition parties. The researcher also analysed smaller opposition parties and where they did not have active accounts analysed the leaders of the parties. These included the FF+'s Peter Mulder and the UDM's Bantu Holomisa. The IFP Twitter was also inactive and the researcher attempted to analyse some of the IFP politicians' Twitter accounts.

Based on an analysis of South Africa's opposition parties' Twitter use on the day of the 2014 National Election the researcher was able to identify both the way in which the parties used Twitter and the different types of tweets that they sent out. Their tweets comprised voter information, answering questions, thanking their voters, informing people of their leaders' appearances and movements, voting irregularities, attacking the ANC and other opposition parties and engaging with journalists and the media.

Voter Interaction



The largest volume of tweets comprised voter interaction. The opposition parties used Twitter to inform their voters of everything they needed to do during the day and what they needed to take with to the voting stations. They informed their supporters of any major questions that arose during the day.

The DA crafted specific messages accompanied by images which were strategically sent out during the day to inform their supporters. The other opposition parties used an ad-hoc system where they drew from frequently asked questions and time of the day.

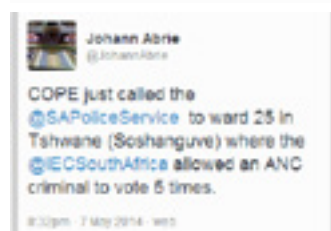
This level of effort combined with the personalization of replies and additional information demonstrates that the opposition parties were actively engaging their supporters in conversation and tailoring messages specifically for the person that sends the tweet. Despite the fact that a lot of the engagement revolved around thanking people for voting, each message contained a personal element to it and often encouraged further engagement.



Agang leader Mamphela Ramphele and DA leader Helen Zille travelled the country on visiting voting stations and greeting voters as well as spending time casting their ballots. The other opposition party leaders largely spent time in their home provinces where they cast their vote and interacted with voters before flying to the National Elections Centre in Pretoria to await the results.

There is an argument to be made that these tweets merely serve to deepen the usage of Twitter as a one-way information sharing platform, however

these tweets demonstrate Twitter's ability to act as a real-time Election tracker allowing supporters to follow their leaders no matter where they are in the country. This use of Twitter also highlights Twitter's ability to magnify a message through the use of not only ordinary citizens but party activists and staff member.



The opposition parties used Twitter during the day to encourage their supporters to alert them to any irregularities with the voting process. The DA and Agang also asked people to get in touch with their helplines to report these issues. The parties also used twitter to keep their supporters updated with the progress of reporting and resolving the irregularities how the party would resolve them. In certain instances the parties themselves or the leaders of the party used Twitter to report issues that they had found.

The vast number of tweets from both parties and their supporters about voter irregularities has been one of the key findings of this paper. This was the first election where Twitter has been used in this way and its ability for real time instant information sharing has shown its potential in acting as a space where parties and their supporters can report issues timeously. The ease of access and open nature of Twitter ensured that the IEC were held to the highest standard and that the elections were truly



In terms of tweets attacking other opposition parties and the ANC, the opposition parties generally stuck to a script of opposing the current status quo and opting for a party that will change that status quo. There were very few tweets which actively attacked the ANC or other opposition parties and if there were, these were generally friendly and humorous banter. The EFF were the only opposition party that used Twitter to actively call out the ANC and whenever they picked up on ANC officials or members doing something illegal they tweeted about it using images of the offence. Party leaders also made use of Twitter to respond to other party supporters who attacked or insulted them. With each response they insured that they not only gave a proper answer but backed it up with links to their websites and policies.



On Election Day the majority of engagement involved political parties and their leaders retweeting media houses and journalists whose tweets were favourable to the party or featured a member of the parties' leadership. The party leaders also engaged with the journalists when they were asked a question or attacked on something they had done or on their parties' track record.

The parties also used Twitter to highlight their appearances on TV and inform their supporters of when they were being interviewed. This was done through the use of press releases which were released with a key phrase and a link to the press release on their website or through the use of an image showing them being interviewed by the news network or journalist.

This use of Twitter also highlighted the importance of mixing traditional media and new media in a way that engages supporters and ultimately brings voters the vote. While Twitter is an important platform it cannot act in isolation and many of the opposition parties successfully blended Twitter with their other media communications.

Opposition parties in South Africa realised the importance of Twitter and used it to create an environment where not only important election discussions took place but also a space where important information was shared with their supporters and other members of the electorate. The identification of several different types of tweets demonstrates an attempt by the parties to use Twitter as more than just a one way mouth piece for the party to bring out its supporters.

When considering Twitter's role in the 2014 Election, one needs to consider its importance as another space in which people are able to access and participate in democracy as well as in elections. While this was not the Twitter election many had hoped for, Twitter has certainly shown its potential as a space for political engagement, voting issue reporting and a space for instant political information sharing.

Taking into consideration the rapid growth of Twitter in South Africa combined with the rise in smartphone penetration, the 2019 Election looks set to be South Africa's true Twitter election.

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Twitter has become one of journalism's most powerful tools. News often breaks on Twitter first. In fact, it's where news often happens.

Twitter Wars

By Laura Shortridge

Many things can and have sparked off Twitter controversies: an offensive joke from a business account, an image of a smiling huntress behind a dead lion, a racist comment from someone about to board a plane to Africa, an intriguing comment from a famous person, and a Twitter war (a "twar") between two or more high-profile accounts.

On the fourth of February, 2014, Daily Maverick columnists Ivo Vegter and Rebecca Davis had a disagreement on Twitter. As all Twitter discussions are public, others joined in, including rape survivor and activist Michelle Solomon in support of Rebecca Davis. Before long, Vegter and Solomon were arguing, and that is when former Sunday Times columnist David Bullard weighed in to accuse Solomon of making up her rape.

"As I've told you before Ivo, Solomon is not a full box of chocs. She's a fantasist."

"Aw c'mon Mish. We all know you're a fruitcake who fantasises about group sex with me. In your dreams ginger."

"Do you have anything else in your life to cling to other than your alleged rape? If you were raped then lay a charge."

"Face facts Mish. You got horribly drunk, had a bonk, regretted it in the morning and called it rape to protect your reputation."

Very quickly, the fight between Solomon and Bullard became the biggest topic on South African Twitter. Within a day, it had caused a controversy that spread across South Africa; complicated, with multiple aspects, and one to last for weeks. Even now, it remains in the news as Bullard has brought a lawsuit against the Mail & Guardian for alleged defamation over comments made by Mail & Guardian employees about Bullard when commenting on this twar.

Bullard's tweets, while harsh, were not, by themselves, unusual. All forms of social media see people arguing with other people all the time, and Bullard has not been the first person to make these accusations against Solomon. This had not been the first time Bullard had made these accusations either. That's the thing about social media, especially Twitter.

An incident does not have to be extremely unusual for it to become controversial; it simply has to happen under a certain set of circumstances.

Twitter, which many might once have been seen as a silly, childish social media platform, has since become almost a cornerstone in modern society. For many it's where they find their news, their entertainment, their friends, and even their jobs. Unlike Facebook, it is simple and easy to customize your Twitter feed. You are not required to follow those who choose to follow you, and, barring a few exceptions, you do not need permission to follow any account you wish.

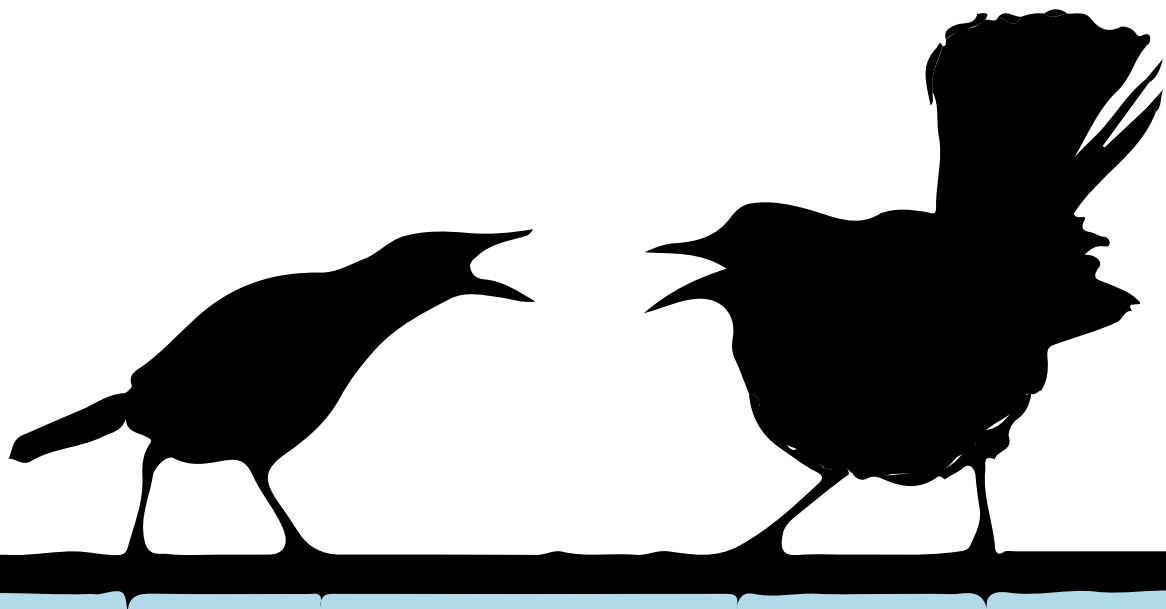
It's how businesses connect with their customers, and celebrities reach out to their fans. Through Twitter, two people from entirely different walks of life, even from different countries, can connect and communicate and, as people on Twitter are still people, conflict.

It's very easy for Twitter communities to form. People from similar areas, with similar interests, or from the same social circle will follow each other. As you can see the conversations between those you follow, any given conversation can lead to a long public discussion, or argument, between several users.

All this happens without editorial oversight. There is no proof reading, and no-one suggesting when a punch should be pulled. In twars, there are no formal rules of debate. They are worded arguments meet school-yard brawl. It's important to remember that almost all expression is expected to happen in 140 characters or less.

In short, Twitter provides a social sphere that is both public and personal, and the more followers an account has, the more public their personal interactions are. Michelle Solomon has over three thousand followers, David Bullard and Ivo Vegter have more than 10k each, and Rebecca Davis over 13k.

In cases such as this, the individuals involved can often become symbols behind which two polarized groups, almost armies, rally. The argument between Solomon and Bullard very quickly turned into more than a fight between two individuals. Solomon became, to many, the example of every rape survivor who has had his or her story questioned and discredited by those who would rather silence rape survivors than face an ugly truth. To those who saw Solomon as such, Bullard was the example of every person who refuses to



believe a rape survivor's story, and who harasses and bullies rape survivors in an attempt to silence them. Others took Bullard's side, and viewed Solomon as an example of all women who lie about being raped for attention. To these people, Bullard became a champion.

While the main players in such a case are turned into symbols, their supporters have, if they wish, the luxury of remaining anonymous. Those who chose to take advantage of this luxury usually do so because it allows them to say things they would not ordinarily state publicly. This, more often than not, results in them being extra harsh, as they do not need to fear any real consequences.

Twitter controversies do not remain on Twitter long. Solomon, for example, took to her site, where she published an article about Bullard, including previous incidents where he had directed similar accusations towards her, called "I've had enough, and so should you". This article was republished on Women24, while blogs and media outlets across South Africa began to produce news and opinion pieces about Solomon, Bullard, rape survivors and "rape culture". Each one of these topics by themselves is both complex and controversial enough to produce a large amount of content, discussion and interest.

It's very easy to see how and why this incident became the controversy that spread as fast and as widely as it did.

While Bullard certainly had his supporters in the Solomon / Bullard incident, the general consensus with this particular case was that Bullard was in the wrong. His tweets were felt by most to be offensive and unnecessary. It is therefore interesting to take a look at the next controversy, related directly to this one, involving Bullard, as here he found far more outspoken supporters, including previously mentioned Ivo Vegter and political cartoonist Jerm.

On the 12th of February, 2014, Bullard announced an intended donation of R3000 to Rape Crisis, and began to encourage his followers to donate as well. This move received mixed responses. Many were impressed with Bullard and happy that a charity

organization would benefit. Others treated his donation, which came with a lot of boasting, with heavy suspicion.

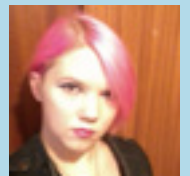
Rape Crisis itself created the following Twitter storm when it took to Twitter to announce that would not "be party to" Bullard's "whitewashing his actions through associating himself with" them, and that they rejected his donation.

Many, even of those who had been outspoken against Bullard himself, criticized Rape Crisis' decision, believing that no charity organization should ever reject offered donations under any circumstances. Bullard had undeniably been encouraging others to donate as well. Many felt Rape Crisis was ungrateful.

Others applauded them, insisting that the acceptance of Bullard's money would carry with it an association with him and an acceptance of his actions. Bullard had undeniably been telling anyone who still questioned his attitude towards rape survivors in general and Solomon in particular about his donation. Many felt that he promoted exactly the attitude Rape Crisis tries to fight, and that accepting his money would cause more damage to rape survivors than good.

Once again, Twitter was polarized into mostly two groups, and media outlets across South Africa began to produce content. To this day, the topics of rape and rape culture are rarely written about in South Africa without mentioning David Bullard.

Bullard, who often purposefully picks twars with others on Twitter, has continued to make divisive moves, the most recent, of course, is his lawsuit against 'Mail & Guardian'. It has been noted he seems friendly, at least via Twitter, with other controversial South Africans such as Steve Hoffmeyr and Dan Roodt. It should be noted, however, that Twitter is beginning to show signs of being mostly bored of any topic involving David Bullard. Unless something really big happens, (which is entirely plausible,) it's unlikely he will be seen at the centre of any major controversy again, at least not for a long while.



Laura Shortridge is a secular humanist and feminist who turned her tendency to over-think practically everything into a writing career.

An illustration of several light blue birds perched on a thin branch that curves across the top of the page. The birds are facing right, with some looking towards the viewer.

Zille vs Du Plessis

The utter and heart-breaking stupidity of words

An illustration of four light blue birds perched on a thin branch that curves across the middle of the page. The birds are facing right, with some looking towards the viewer.

By Sisonke Msimang

This past Sunday, Helen Zille, the leader of the DA, launched a bizarre racist attack on City Press political reporter Carien du Plessis. In tweet after tweet that evening, Zille suggested that Du Plessis was biased against the DA because of her race. It was breath-taking to watch. It also raised serious questions in the minds of many observers about whether Helen Zille isn't the DA's biggest liability.

Throughout it all, Du Plessis maintained a caustic and dignified silence, breathing new life into William Faulker's famous words, "Talk, talk, talk: the utter and heartbreaking stupidity of words."

What she said

Zille tweeted many things. She suggested for example, that Du Plessis "is so scared that she would (sic) be doomed by her own skin colour that she is bending over backwards to prove her political correctness." She added, "She is so terrified that she will be damned by her own complexion that she has to bend over backwards to prove her political correctness."

She tweeted herself into a frenzy, and then, slipped in a seemingly innocuous piece of gossip. Zille tweeted that Du Plessis "once told me she was planning to vote EFF, and that is quite obvious in her writing." The meaning of this statement can only be fully grasped by those who understand that Julius Malema and the EFF have come to symbolize ZANU-PF and the 'horror' of Mugabe in the minds of many white South Africans.

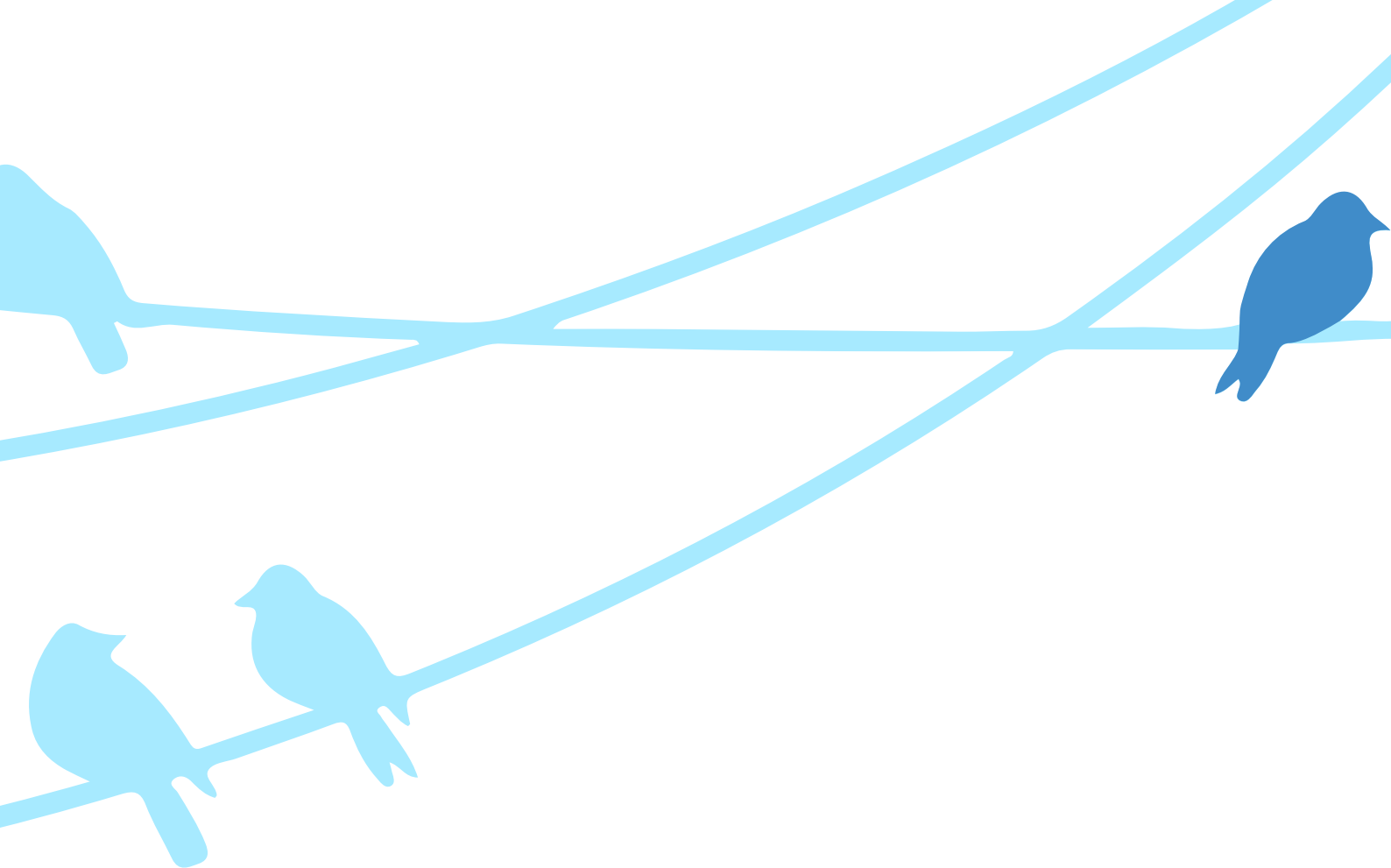
Race baiting and the spectre of the EFF

In Zille's mind, not only is Du Plessis biased against the DA; but her insecurity about her whiteness has made her crazy enough to consider voting for the EFF. In letting the country in on a juicy little secret about Du Plessis, which if it is true, surely betrays even the loose ethical codes that regulate politico-journo disclosures, Zille deploys the EFF as the bogeyman. The EFF is the symbol of the black masses run amok. Her 'reveal' about Du Plessis' intention to vote EFF bears all the hallmarks of race baiting.

Using the cloak of challenging Du Plessis' 'bias' towards the EFF, Zille is really just undermining her opponent by stating the obvious, which is that only a white fool would believe in black nonsense (i.e. the rhetoric of the EFF). A black fool, presumably, can be forgiven for believing black nonsense. Du Plessis' major crime seems to be that she is a white fool who doesn't believe in white nonsense (i.e. the rhetoric of the DA).

Undermining 'transformation'

The DA has worked hard to convince South Africans that it is sensitive to the modern-day struggles of black people. With Zille at the helm, the party has done a solid job marketing the idea of a post-racial South Africa, particularly to the black middle class. But with her try-hard Xhosa, her frequent gaffes on matters of race (including the recent Mamphela drama and the Employment Equality Amendment Act flip-flop) and her stubborn belief that the only reason black people don't vote for the DA is that it doesn't have a black leaders, it has become clear that the party has a serious race problem, and its name is Helen.



Stuck between the past and the present

Somehow, Zille seems stuck between the past and the present, between the generation of RW Johnson and their scorched-earth liberalism, and the generation of Mmusi Maimane, Mbali Ntuli, and Mabine Seane, and their cool but proud professionalism. The blacks who are on the ascent in the DA echo Tito Mboweni in his Reserve Bank days: they are hard-working and professional, undeniably erudite, and unashamedly black without being too hung up about it.

Similarly, Du Plessis represents the kind of white young person that Zille can't fully wrap her head around. She and her cohorts relate to politics in ways that are fundamentally different from Zille and her generation of journalists and women and whites. Du Plessis has the freedom to live with her whiteness differently from how Zille has lived with her white identity. Zille's insistence that Du Plessis' political and personal choices are the result of her feeling guilty about being white seem oddly old-school, the product of a time when there were only a set number of ways one could feel about being white and privileged in a racist South Africa.

On the ropes

For some time now, Zille has been on the ropes. She has mis-stepped badly on a number of occasions. Her hectoring tone, her harking back to old ways of

understanding the world (progressive for then but hopelessly out of touch now), her mastery of new technology, seem desperate rather than relevant.

In the end, then it is clear to anyone watching Zille's spiral that her fight is not with Du Plessis, but with herself.

On Sunday night, as Zille lobbed tweet after tweet at Du Plessis, it was like watching a bully pummel the skinny kid in the schoolyard. After a while though, those who were watching on Twitter realised that the skinny kid had slipped away. The bully seemed not to have noticed. She was still punching, squawking, "Geddit! Geddit?" like a giant angry hadeda. A few spellbound bystanders remained. They looked on, worried and dismayed. They pitied the bully and wondered if she would be okay when she got home.

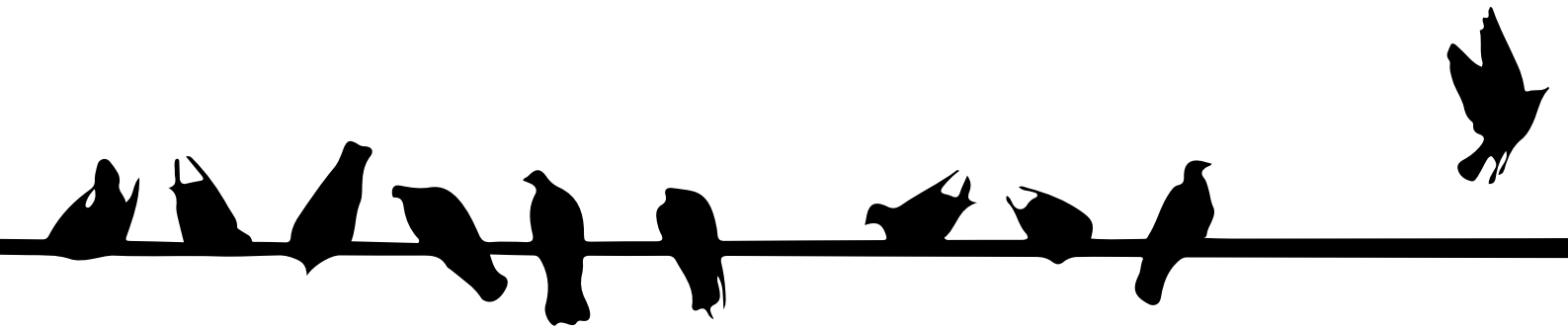
Elbert Green Hubbard, a late 19th century American writer and philosopher, suggested that "he who does not understand your silence will probably not understand your words."

Du Plessis watched the bully in wary silence. Throughout the attack she refused to dignify the insults with words that were unlikely to be understood. Zille lurched violently into the next day, still flailing, still unaware that she was punching at shadows. Unaware even of the great silence around her noise.



Sisonke Msimang writes about race, gender and politics in Africa and beyond. She lives in Mozambique and works for Sonke Gender Justice.

If you can't take the heat...



By Helen Zille

Social media – Twitter in particular – robbed journalists of their power to interpret the world for the rest of humanity. People who want to remain informed know that if anything news-worthy happens anywhere, Twitter is likely to break it first. And as a major story unfolds, you can choose to follow the timeline that offers the most informative account. Sometimes that may be a good journalist's. Often it isn't. And if you follow the hashtag, you can read whatever anyone says about the subject. Twitter turns everyone into a reporter; the only difference is that journalists get paid.

Analysis and opinion have also been liberated from the self-appointed, self-referential journalistic elite, called “political commentators”. There are certainly some outstanding analysts who are worthy of this title. But most speak primarily to, and seek approval from, each other, with a loyalty code as binding as the Cosa Nostra's. And there are never any consequences for being wrong. Some of them are still stuck in the anti-DA rhetoric of the late 1990s. Tackle one of them, and the hack pack will hunt you down.

But it doesn't matter anymore. Everyone is empowered to present a different version of reality, and to fight back. And some journalists seem surprised to learn that media freedom is not a right exclusively reserved for them.

That is why I was bemused by the question John Robbie posed to me on his 702 morning show about whether I was not worried about challenging a “senior journalist” just before an election. That would

have been a valid question ten years ago. But today I can reach, in a single tweet, more than double the weekly circulation of her newspaper.

This levels the playing field. Now we can raise the cost of dishonest, prejudiced, and tendentious journalism. We can expose double standards and hypocrisy. And of course some journalists squeal, just like the schoolyard bully when, at last, someone turns around and hits him back.

If a journalist criticises you, the unwritten code is that you should grovel and apologise, however misinformed their analysis. Any other response is deeply offensive to them. Well, in a democracy, no one has the right NOT to be offended. If we all went around saying sweet nothings to each other, there would be no point in entrenching free speech as a right.

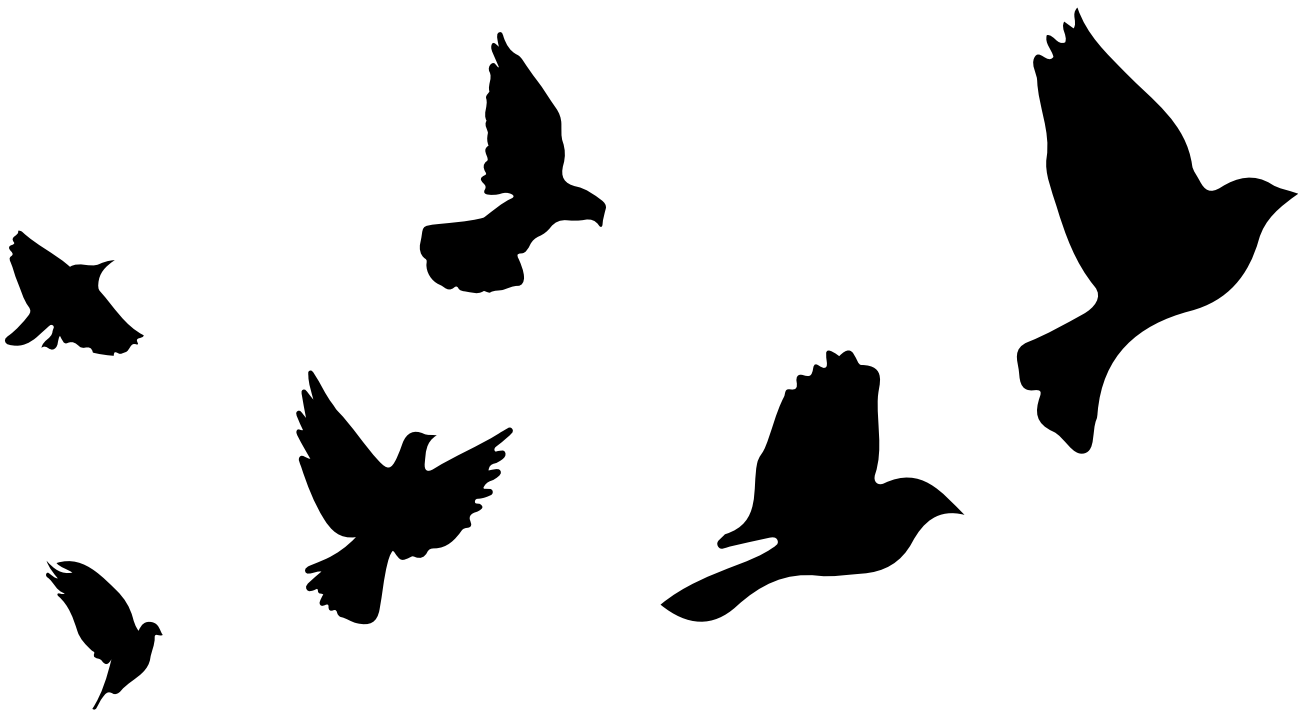
And, while most journalists are notoriously thin-skinned, they believe everyone else (especially politicians) must just swallow everything that is shoved down their throats.

Take @dayjoyskillz, whose twitter bio describes him as a journalist, or, more pretentiously, a “Creative Partner @E-touch News”.

He wrote the following at the time of the DA's Cosatu House march: “I wish that token @LindiMazibuko got hit with brick on her pig face... Beat them Cosatu beat them... Bloody Agent !!!”

After which one @Zwelo wrote: “It's not enough, I want to see white blood.”

This is an example of hundreds of similar messages that DA leaders receive every month, and there is clearly no bar on black people using words like “Kaffir” or “Nigga”.



Then there is the ubiquitous “F” word. “Zile (sic) fuck you” is one of the milder tweets I received on this subject. I was tempted to reply “Not until you learn how to spell my name” -- but I resisted.

Then there was this little gem from @rasebitse. “@helenzille I won’t mind to rape you Zille and make South Africa proud. I wish you can be shot to death by Malema.” This kind of threat would cause an outcry if it was directed at almost any other South African (especially a journalist). I retweeted it, to expose the double standard.

And what was the response? A few journalists criticised me for retweeting it! I rest my case.

So what does this all mean? I think it is a symptom of the rage and fear that some journalists feel at losing their special status in society. While newspapers will take a long time to die, their readership will continue to dwindle as people become more tech-savvy, and learn how to filter the dross, while selectively following writers who offer reliable, information and informed analysis, without self-indulgence, and because they are fun to read. There is no writing that surpasses good journalism. And for this reason there will always be a demand for skilled journalists.

But given the scarcity of supply, newspapers increasingly have to tap another vein to maintain circulation: Outrage. To be sure, there is plenty of stuff to be legitimately outraged about in South Africa. But when newspapers want to “balance” the outrage scales between the ANC and the DA, they usually have to manufacture some and heap it on the DA’s side.

The Urban Dictionary defines “manufactured

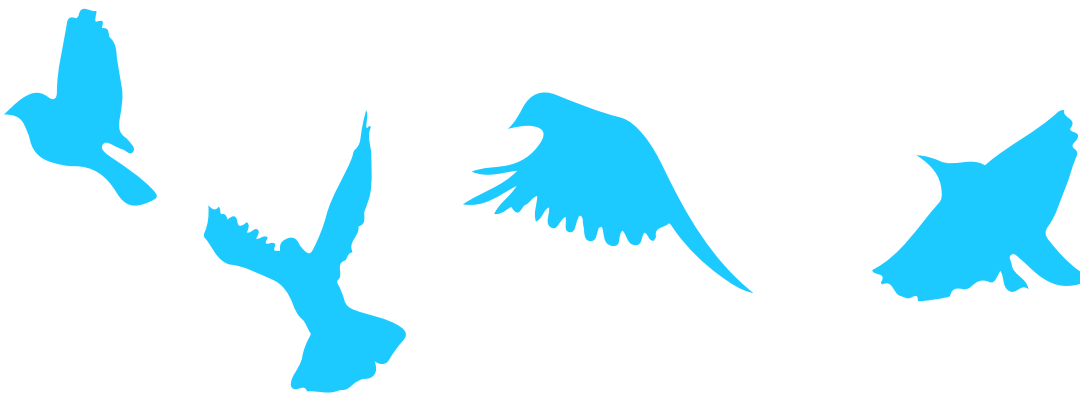
outrage” as “a falsified righteous outrage at things that are basically unimportant and meaningless.”

Events of the past week have given me occasion to think of past occasions where manufactured outrage caused a collective media meltdown that lasted, in some cases, for months.

Does anyone still remember the Erasmus Commission? It was an ANC political hit squad, disguised as a judicial commission of enquiry, and chaired by a judge to give it a semblance of objectivity. Asked for comment, I said: “Unfortunately some judges allow themselves to be used, and Nathan Erasmus is one of them.” Predictably, the sky fell in. I had, apparently, disgraced the DA by “disrespecting the Judiciary”. There were loud calls for my resignation. Members of my own party implored me to apologise and withdraw. I refused to do so (and not only for reasons of stubbornness!)

I argued that respect for judges is confined to their legitimate role in the criminal justice system, as well as constitutionally compliant commissions. The ANC’s kangaroo court did not pass that test, and the Judge had forfeited his right to respect by agreeing to chair it (in the same way as drunk judges do when they drive into walls). I challenged the constitutionality of the Erasmus Commission in court and won. Of course none of the commentators who had vilified me for months ever withdrew their comments or apologised.

Then there was the occasion when, battered by ANC and media criticism for being “sexist” because I had only appointed men to my cabinet, I responded as follows: “That is rich coming from a party that has



never had a woman leader in its 100-year history and is led by a self-confessed womaniser who put all his wives at risk by having unprotected sex with an HIV-positive woman.”

I should have added something about having sex with his friends’ daughters, but I forgot.

Anyway, what I did say (as factual as it was) sent the media’s outrage-manufacturing machine into overdrive. For months!

Less than a year later, the president was at it again, this time having impregnated the daughter of another friend. Some of the stuff journalists then said about him made my comments look like compliments. I doubt whether any of them spotted the contradiction.

There are many other examples. When I described Eastern Cape children streaming into Western Cape schools to escape the educational meltdown in their own province as “educational refugees”, the ANC and the media went into paroxysms of outrage. But a while later, when Nathi Mthethwa ascribed the increasing rate of attempted murder in Cape Town to the growing number of “foreign and economic refugees” (clearly separating the two categories), no-one said a word.

Any objective person would have seen that my reference reflected empathy for the plight of the children, while Mthethwa’s reflected total disdain. Yet his remarks were ignored, while mine sparked (yet again) calls for my resignation, and analysts sagely concluding that I had become a liability to the DA.

Of course, both politicians and journalists manufacture outrage. It is usually part of a symbiotic relationship between the two, where it is often difficult to distinguish the parasite from the host. The DA, like all political parties, has its “dial-a-quote” brigade who love seeing their “anonymous” spin described as information emanating from “senior insiders”. Everyone else in the party knows that they feel aggrieved at not being senior enough, having been overtaken up the greasy pole by talented newcomers. That is their agenda and they are, in turn, happy to feed the agenda of the self-selected “commentariat”.

I have always agreed with the well-worn observation that politics is not for sissies. But nor is journalism. And as my mentor and editor, Allister Sparks, once told me – in a lesson that has remained with me to this day – “If you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen.” DM

“Helen Zille has been the Premier of the Western Cape since 2009.

Before Helen Zille began her career in politics, she worked as a political correspondent for the Rand Daily Mail, where she covered key political stories, such as the death of black consciousness activist, Steve Biko. In 1977, she was able to prove that Biko had been tortured to death and that the official version of the story, which claimed he had died of natural causes, was false.

From the 1980s onward she became involved in NGOs and activist organisations, including the Open Society Foundation, the Independent Media Diversity Trust and the Black Sash. She also campaigned against vigilantism and repression in the Cape townships, and was part of the peace movement that worked to bring warring factions in Crossroads together.

She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Witwatersrand and joined the former Democratic Party in the mid-1990s, where she was asked to reformulate the party’s education policy and stand as a candidate on its election list for the Western Cape legislature. She also acted as Technical Adviser to the party at CODESA in the early 1990s.

Helen was elected to the provincial parliament in the 1999 general election under the banner of the Democratic Alliance. From 1999 to 2001, she served as Minister of Education in the Western Cape Province. During this two-and-a-half-year period, she made 500 school visits in a campaign to encourage discipline among teachers and improve teaching conditions. When the ANC gained power in 2001, she became leader of the opposition in the Western Cape legislature, where she remained until she was elected as a member of the National Parliament in 2004.

As a Democratic Alliance MP, she served on the Portfolio Committee on Education, and acted as the DA’s National Spokesperson. Her constituency included Langa, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha.

On 15 March 2006, she was elected as Mayor of Cape Town and resigned from parliament. Two years later, in 2008, she was voted World Mayor in a poll of over 800 cities around the world conducted by global think tank World Mayors.

On 6 May 2007, she was elected as the Leader of the Democratic Alliance at the party’s Federal Congress in Johannesburg and, in May 2009, became Premier of the Western Cape Province following the April 2009 National and Provincial Government elections.”



BACKCHAT

Carien du Plessis



By Mvuzo Ponono

Interviewer: Carien, thank you for agreeing to do this interview. As described earlier correspondence, the focus of RJR Alive 3 is how Twitter as a technology is changing the media landscape. The way that it was used to attack you is one of our points of departure. I ask that you please forgive me if any of the questions cross into uncomfortable territory.

Q: My first question is, how has Twitter changed journalism and journalism practice?

A: I'm not sure how it's changed the practice since I haven't done research on it myself, but I think it has forced journalists to work harder. It is pushing journalists to report beyond and above the events, because these are old news by the time the story gets in the paper or on the web. So it means stories have to be more insightful and offer some kind of value add to entice people to read them. On the negative side, it's also made journalists lazy – some of them rely on twitter comments or consider them to be the opinion of the majority of people, which is not the case in SA.

Q: More specifically, are there any particular things that Twitter has changed in the relationship between journalism, politics and the public? Helen Zille wrote in her opinion piece on the matter that Twitter destroys journalists special status. She reasoned that her tweets became news because journalists were worried because they were bypassed in the system of information sharing. Do you agree with this particular observation?

A: Twitter offers politicians, celebrities etc a good way to communicate/engage directly with their public, and to convey a message, but it doesn't replace journalism. It places an onus on journalists to report more correctly and fairly than ever, because there is this extra level of direct scrutiny through twitter (eg people can go and read a quote for themselves on someone's TL, so they will know if you've misquoted the person), but it doesn't replace or do away with journalism. Journalists (should) report with credibility, fairness and insight, whereas politicians/celebrities tweet with agendas.

Q: Have the number of followers, or the number of individuals that follow an individual, changed relations between journalists and



politicians? Helen Zille wrote that the reach that politicians have on Twitter has levelled the playing field. Is this the case?

A: I don't think it is. See my response to the above question.

Q: What are your thoughts on dealing with politicians with Twitter accounts? Has it made a your job tougher or easier?

A: It's made it easier especially when you can't get hold of the politician. Zwelinzima Vavi has tweeted his comments at times when it was difficult to get hold of him. The downside is that all journos then have access to the comment, not just those who take the trouble to call him. By the time it gets reported it will also be old news to the readers who are on twitter.

Q: How should politicians use Twitter, and what should they not do? This question could be in particular reference to the way that you were attacked recently.

A: They should limit their tweets and not tweet in anger – and perhaps have media advisers that moderate tweets. Giving tweets a personal touch and engaging to a certain extent on twitter can work to their advantage.

Q: Do you think that journalism has the capacity to deal with the manipulation of Twitter by politicians or other powerful sectors of society. The Rwandan government for example used a fake Twitter account to attack South African diplomats. Is the industry responding to the change well enough? Are journalists offered protection from abuse by individuals?

A: I can't answer for the industry responding to change – my knowledge and research on this are too limited. It is up to individual journalists to stay up to date with new

technologies and their uses/abuses. Fake twitter accounts are also exposed soon enough, like the Rwandan one.

As for abuse – it is possible to block people on twitter. As a journalist you're always open to abuse, on whatever platform – twitter perhaps makes it easier for people to abuse you. It really helps to have established your own reputation and personality on twitter so that when you are attacked about something, regular followers tend to make up their own mind on who is in the wrong.

Q: When the story about you being attacked on Twitter raged on, you did not respond. Why didn't you?

A: As a rule I don't engage in twitter debates, especially not Twars. Twitter is not the right platform for it.

Q: What is the future offered by Twitter. Can we expect popular individuals to use unfettered power offered by a mass following to bully and manipulate on social media. Or is the future rosier than this?

A: Twitter is just one medium for engagement. People also engage us through email, phone calls and (not so often anymore) letters. Politicians can also attack us from podiums, and they have done so in the past (remember Jackson Mthembu's "don't buy City Press"?). Abuse will happen when you publish things that matter. It's part of the job. Twitter is just an additional platform.

Interviewer: I hope that I have not asked too many questions and you can cover them all. Thank you again for agreeing to this interview.

*Mvuzo Ponono is
Xhosa man born in the
Eastern Cape. He holds
a Master's degree from
Rhodes University*



Good Lord What a bunch of Tweets

By Strato Copteros

Fabled wartime British Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, said, “A lie travels halfway round the world before the truth has time to put its pants on.” Now, with the proliferation of social media, and twitter in particular, a lie can circumnavigate the globe before the truth even realises it’s not wearing trousers. And it took another British political figure with as title to prove it. Indeed, the death of Lord McAlpine, who passed away in January 2014, has been attributed directly to users of Twitter by some; and I’m not sure I disagree. Imagine being a respected retired politician, a former Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party, peacefully living out your sunset years in Italy; when one day hundreds of thousands of twitter-fiends falsely accuse you of being a paedophile. This bitter pill may or may not have killed Lord McAlpine, but the good lord put up a heck of a fight before he swallowed it – while setting a ground-breaking global media law precedent in the process.

First things first: Users of twitter are not exempt from any laws or ethical standards that the mainstream media must adhere to. Cyberspace is not a mythical universe where the usual rules do not apply! And unlike frenzied crowds where particular participants often cannot be identified, individual contributors to twitter-trending mass hysteria can be tracked down and brought to book if what they’ve said carries legal culpability. Yes, we’re human, mistakes happen, sometimes we get it wrong. But just like in the tangible three-dimensional universe, those that make blunders in the twitter-sphere, can be made to pay for them; with real-world money. Ask the BBC, ITV, comedian Alan Davies, writer George Monbiot and wife of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sally Bercow, who between them paid out almost £400 000 in damages to Lord McAlpine for their defamatory tweets about him. Later, his

All tools can however be extremely hazardous if incorrectly used; and in the case of Twitter, the legal implications are profound.

legal counsel, Andrew Reid, stated, “Twitter is not just a closed coffee shop among friends. It goes out to hundreds of thousands of people and you must take responsibility for it. It is not a place where you can gossip and say things with impunity, and we demonstrated that.”

Indeed, a coffee shop it certainly isn't, and Twitter's value as a media tool in the rapid dissemination and acquisition of information, is not in dispute here. All tools can however be extremely hazardous if incorrectly used; and in the case of Twitter, the legal implications are profound. As somewhat of a socialist, I vehemently disagree with Lord McAlpine's Thatcherite political stances, But in his legal response to being falsely accused of paedophilia on Twitter, I wholeheartedly supported and applauded him! They may have taken a fatal toll on him, but closely watching his court battles, is some of the best fun I've had in years. I love telling this story! And best you heed its warning.

The date: November 2012.

The context: A Britain reeling at the fall of an icon. An ITV documentary, seen by almost 2.5 million viewers, revealed that the recently deceased Jimmy Saville – legendary BBC presenter for over 50 years and patron of various children's charities – had sexually molested several minors. This was followed by leaked information that rumours of Saville's sexual misconduct had floated around the BBC since the 70's without any action being taken; and that a BBC Newsnight expose of Saville, to be televised soon after his death, had secretly been shelved.

The mood: A public and media hyper-awareness of child molestation by high profile individuals; and its potential cover-up by supposedly esteemed institutions.

The players: A BBC now eager to prove that it would give no quarter to anyone, regardless of how famous or connected they were; an ITV feeling quite balshy after being the channel to 'out' Saville's sordid past and a Twitter that through the smartphone revolution was well and truly booming.

The focal point: One Steve Messham, who in a BBC Newsnight programme on child abuse in British orphanages, said that one of his abusers years ago was “a leading Tory politician of the Thatcher era”.

Understandably, the BBC was on a “we're not complicit, we'll expose it” bender after the Saville debacle, hence the Newsnight child abuse focus; but it didn't go as far as naming Messham's molesting politician. Of course, the internet went wild with speculation as to his identity. Eventually, somewhere, somehow, out of this speculative cyber-

soup emerged the name Alistair McAlpine. It began being bandied about on the Net, and to be tweeted and retweeted so often – both by ‘normal’ citizens and high profile individuals – that that it started to trend. Both the BBC and ITV picked up on it. Racing to pip each other to the post, up it went onto their web-sites. They're both part of the ‘always on, constantly updated, if you're not first you're nowhere’ corporatized, cyberspaced, modern media industry; and after ‘Savillegate’ they each had particular points to prove. So they put Lord McAlpine's face on TV.

This is my favourite part of the story.

What do you think Steve Messham said when he saw McAlpine's picture? Go on. Close your eyes, take a guess.

Obviaaas!

“Err; that's not him.”

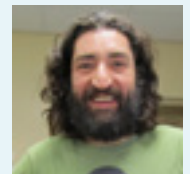
Oops.

By this time, Lord McAlpine was devastated. The entire affair, as his legal counsel later described it, caused him “immeasurable distress which cannot be rectified”. He sued both the BBC and ITV for libel, (the name for defamation in Britain), and received £185 000 pounds in damages from the one and £125 000 from the other; which he promptly donated to “Children In Need” and other charities. But here's the kicker: The good lord had the time, the money and the wherewithal to put together a legal and technical team that threatened to track down every single person who tweeted or retweeted his name, and issue summons. Eventually, those with 500 followers or less were told to donate to “Children In Need” and issue an apology. Those with large followings however, didn't get off so easily.


Cue in Sally Bercow.

Sally Bercow is the wife of the Speaker of the House of Commons. By her own admission, she prides herself in being mischievous, with tongue-in-cheek humour and devil may dare spunky abandon, which has garnered her over 50 000 followers on Twitter. At the height of the McAlpine twitter-trend furore, she tweeted “Why is Lord McAlpine trending? *innocent face*”

In the case of libel against her, her barrister argued that she really didn't mean to defame Lord McAlpine. That *innocent face* was similar to a director's instruction to an actor in a screenplay; denoting genuine bewilderment. In his judgement, Justice Tugendhat clearly didn't buy that interpretation. Neither do I. As a wife of a leading political figure, she'd have to be on a mission to Mars not to know why McAlpine was trending. The judge developed the argument further however, taking



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twitter lingo into account and stating that, "In my judgment, the reasonable reader would understand the words *innocent face* as being insincere and ironical. There is no sensible reason for including those words in the tweet if they are to be taken as meaning that the defendant simply wants to know the answer to a factual question." He then concluded that the clear sarcasm in her tweet implied that she thought McAlpine was a paedophile and that she didn't have to state this outright for her tweet to be considered libellous. Counsel for the plaintiff later told the press that the judgement "highlights how established legal principles apply to social media, and how the courts take account of the particular way in which social media operates when reaching decisions on whether publications are defamatory."

It was a huge decision, because it applied online lingua franca in examining the notion of implied innuendo, without the need for statements to be plainly and directly defamatory. The legal precedent it creates, and the principle behind it, are very simple, and Mrs Bercow summed them up perfectly herself on the day the judgement came out. "Today's ruling should be seen as a warning to all social media users. Things can be held to be seriously defamatory, even when you do not intend them to be defamatory and do not make any express accusation. On this, I have learned my own lesson the hard way." Hard for her, hilarious for others. Many Twitter users tweeted: "Why is Sally Bercow trending? *libel face*" on the day of her hearing. But the implications of this court decision for users of Twitter aren't funny at all. And while it was made in Britain, its core tenets will certainly apply to the South African juristic system too.

South African law is very clear. A statement that damages the public reputation of the person about whom it is made, constitutes defamation. This includes any implications of dishonesty, criminality, or sexual, political or commercial misconduct. At the same time, a statement that reveals the private information of another, amounts to invasion of privacy. The rights to privacy and dignity, (ergo a sound reputation), are both enshrined in our Constitution. Freedom of speech is also a constitutionally entrenched right; and in the clash of two competing rights such as freedom of speech and right to reputation, truth and public interest will prevail. The foremost defence available here is the combined defence of truth and public interest. That the statement is fundamentally – if not precisely – true AND that it was in the public interest to make it. The courts also draw clear distinctions

between genuine public interest, and what is merely of salacious interest to the public. Another defence is making fair comment or expressing heartfelt opinion, based on facts. Untrue or not in the public interest; or opinion that is unsubstantiated by fact, will not stand in court. A further defence is qualified privilege – reporting what was said in parliament or court. For example, you can't be sued for defamation when reporting that a witness stated that the accused was a rapist. Court reporting however, operates within certain legal parameters, which experienced court reporters understand. Joe Public doesn't. In Britain for example, those who tweeted images of an alleged child killer are currently facing charges of contempt of court.

Ultimately, tweets are small strange things. Teeny written sound-bites, without the available word-count to substantiate a particular opinion, comment or statement. They allow for no deeper nuance or factual clarification – open both to personal interpretation and catastrophic misinterpretation. No one had any idea, and still doesn't, why Lord McAlpine's name came up, how this conclusion was reached, or what facts had been examined before the assumption was made. There was no reasoned argument, no supporting evidence, no explained investigative process. And the danger such a calamity highlights, is of a mainstream media that should follow due process and adhere to clear journalistic standards, getting caught up in, and caught out by, a Twitter frenzy.

Twitter is a tool. Journalism is a practice. Unfortunately, in the Lord McAlpine fiasco, the twitter-hammer told the media-carpenter where to drive the nail, and a lot of fingers got whacked unnecessarily. For all his legal victories, the harm done to Lord McAlpine was irreparable. In his obituary tribute in the "Mail Online", journalist and friend of McAlpine, Simon Heffer, wrote, "He had promised me an interview for the Mail once all the court cases were settled: it never happened, because he simply was not well enough, finally broken down by the cruel strain of being a victim of this terrible lie."

The ramifications of one's tweets go beyond the threat of paying out legal damages. Sometimes there is real potential of permanent harm to someone else. So I write this piece less as a warning and more as an imploration. As much as a media law specialist as a media ethicist. Be warned. At the same time be both sensible and sensitive. People can get badly hurt, even in a coffee shop.

COVERING AFRICAN ELECTIONS

ONE TWEET

AT A TIME

By Kwami Ahiabenu

Democracy is taking root across the Africa continent, with elections serving as important bedrock for this movement. Information and communication technologies have now taken a centre stage in elections providing tools not only for electoral management bodies, but also non-state actors, media and other key stakeholders. (Diamond¹ 2010.) provides a working definition for ICT in democracy as “Any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom. In the contemporary era, it means essentially the modern, interrelated forms of digital ICT—the computer, the Internet, the mobile phone, and countless innovative applications for them, including “new social media” such as Facebook and Twitter.” This reinforces the notion that citizens are now taking a centre stage in so far as they now have new digital tools to enable them report news, highlight corrupt acts, organize collective actions, deepen engagement with duty bearers, expand the frontiers of free speech, and not only monitor voting but also become active participants in the whole electoral continuum. In the basket of ICTS opportunities, social media especially Facebook and twitter are now growing in influence though they cannot yet be seen as the media for the masses. Across the globe, Facebook and twitter are now facilitating news dissemination, getting information out quickly and ensuring newsrooms can interact better with their audiences in a more intimate manner. The situation in most African newsrooms is no different, with a growing number of them turning to the use of digital technologies to produce high quality journalism while at the same time grappling with rising audience appetite for (always on) news. According to (Tenore² 2011), journalists can make use of twitter in 10 ways namely “Get stakeholders to see your story, .Start a conversation, Give your audience a behind-the-scenes look at the reporting process, Keep up

with sources, Find ideas, Find & capture reaction, Find local sources, Dig up the past, Help your audience keep track of an ongoing story, and Turn investigations into collaborative storytelling efforts and Build your credibility”. (Majority of newsrooms mirror the application of twitter this way with some showing creativity in its applications. Most newsrooms are now leveraging the power of social media in news generation process and elections present a fertile ground to ensure they engage their audiences in a more interactive way while undertaking transformative story telling

African elections media landscape

The media have an important role to play in promoting democracy, rule of law and the conduct of free and fair elections. The media, during the electoral process, is expected to ensure voters make informed decisions through provision of relevant information on various options offered by political parties and candidates. One key function of the media during electoral coverage is to serve as a watchdog by promoting transparency which is important for the integrity of the ballots and preventing electoral fraud. However, the media cannot be physically present at all polling stations during voting, so tools such as social media can support the work of the media as citizens who are found across the country can contribute relevant content to support the efforts of the media in playing their oversight role.

African Elections Project

African Elections Project was established in 2008 with the vision of enhancing the ability of journalists, citizen journalists and the news media to provide more timely and relevant elections information and knowledge while undertaking monitoring of specific and important aspects of governance. Its broad based objectives include consolidating the gains of democracy through active promotion of free flow of election information and knowledge as a vehicle to promote free and fair elections; strengthening the media and related civil societies in their role as

1. Liberation Technology.” Journal of Democracy Larry Diamond, 2010

2. Mallary Tenore Sep. 20, 2011 <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/146345/10-ways-journalists-can-use-twitter-before-during-and-after-reporting-a-story>).

enablers of good governance; developing capacity of journalists in the area of elections coverage in order to improve on the quantity and quality of the coverage of elections issues; enhancing the process of information and knowledge sharing of good practices and lessons among all stakeholders involved in election monitoring process; contributing to the reduction of the tendencies of violence by encouraging the media to tell both sides of the elections story; establishing an early warning system to alert stakeholders who may be falling into the trap of inflaming passions which can lead to violence. In order to achieve these objectives, we offer. Training for senior editors, journalists and reporters, set up SMS application in coverage and monitoring, produce election Guide for the Media, develop Information and Knowledge Online Portal and make extensive use of social media in election coverage.

Social media at African Elections Project

African Elections Project team members are always pushing the boundaries when it comes to the use of new media in enhancing elections coverage and distribution while supporting collaboration in the newsroom we set up during our elections coverage. Our newsroom makes use of a myriad of social media tools including facebook, twitter, among others. We use (our newsroom) to break news, promote key stories and seek new information. Using retweets, we are able to re-broadcast content from relevant news makers such as candidates and electoral officials to our followers. We make use of hashtags to monitor key topics during our coverage, which ensures that we can monitor trending topics, join in discussions, aggregate similar information such as electoral fraud and as a tool for Q and A sessions with our online audience during key events such as coverage of presidential debates.

Our typical coverage starts with composition of country newsroom members, development of our coverage plan, determining which mix of social media tools to deploy, and then we offer practical training to journalists who are going to work in our newsroom on how they can leverage social media in telling compelling stories. Over time, we have set up individual country twitter accounts in addition to our pan African twitter account @africanelection. Our strategy is to use twitter to engage, alert and connect with news makers during election coverage. From our experience, twitter does not only make online publishing easy for our newsroom, but also reduces cost and time since we are able to reach out to sources, interact with them, secure quotes without having to do face- to- face interviews. Furthermore, twitter strategy/approach has granted us access to sources, especially politicians - both ruling party and politicians - during the heat of elections since there is a growing number of them active on twitter. Covering elections using social media especially twitter comes with its set of challenges. One key challenge is processing unconfirmed news alerts, though in the same breath, twitter can be useful

- Ghana www.africanelections.org/ghana ,
- Mauritania www.africanelections.org/mauritania ([@mauritaniavoix](https://twitter.com/mauritaniavoix)),
- Malawi www.africanelections.org/malawi (@malawivotes2009 <https://twitter.com/malawivotes2009>)
- Mozambique www.africanelections.org/mozambique ,(@mozambiquevotos <https://twitter.com/mozambiquevotos>)
- Namibia www.africanelections.org/namibia (@namibiaelection <https://twitter.com/namibiaelection>),
- Botswana www.africanelections.org/botswana ([@botswanaelects](https://twitter.com/botswanaelects))
- Togo www.africanelections.org/togo ([@togoelections](https://twitter.com/togoelections)),
- Guinea www.africanelections.org/guinea ([@guineaelections](https://twitter.com/guineaelections))
- Niger www.africanelections.org/niger , ([@nigerelections](https://twitter.com/nigerelections))
- Cote d'Ivoire www.africanelections.org/cotedivoire @cotedivoirevote <https://twitter.com/cotedivoirevote>

when it comes to verification since we are able to send Direct Message (DM) to persons associated with the stories to confirm the efficacy of the reports. Examples of such unverified reports will be claims of electoral victory by a political party. In this case, we usually reach out to the electoral commission's twitter handle to verify if such results were posted or not.

Beyond official interaction with sources, we also make use of twitter as an unofficial means as we follow up leads and verify reports. Also, twitter provides us with new means to communicate with our online audience thereby ensuring citizen journalism is brought to live especially where there is always huge interest by African diasporans and their voices need to be heard; from our experience social media especially twitter provide us with a unique opportunity to bring their voices into our elections coverage conversations.

Social Media Tracking Centre

During Ghana Elections 2012, beyond just using social media tools to support our coverage, we set up Social Media Tracking Centre (SMTC) which provided us with the ability to 'sweep' all social media using predetermined key words., Our newsroom team members then verified these data, processed and published them across our online platforms. Overall, our trackers at the Social Media Tracking Centre for Ghana Elections 2012 used the facility to: provide voter education and promotion of a democratic culture, ensure transparency and accountability of the electoral process and provide the public with information about the activities of the elections., In some cases, voters at polling stations would tweet an incident at their polling station. This tweet would immediately be picked up at the Social Media Tracking Centre and the

news would be sent to the respective organizations such as CODEO (Coalition of Domestic Election Observers), the Police Headquarters, the Electoral Commission, etc. for them to act on it if it was true.

African Elections Project covered Kenya Elections 2013 extensively using our twitter handle (@africanelection). This follows the pattern of our previous coverage. However, Kenya elections was unique in the sense that, we had more twitter users in the country with a lot more interest from others around the world. According to Churchill Otieno, Managing Editor, Digital at Daily Nation, Kenya, "Twitter is both valuable for newsgathering and for news dissemination. For newsgathering, twitter offers a prompt platform for alerting journalists on breaking/developing stories. A journalist who knows how to use the platform will get to eyewitnesses faster, will know what leads to follow on and how. For news dissemination, livetweeting as liveblogging is now an acceptable story format for covering high news value events." For elections coverage, "twitter can be creatively used to crowdsource election reportage, be it incidents and developments in the campaigns or during the polling day. Clever use of hashtags, for example, can allow one to organize information either by themes or geography." He added.

Levi Kabwato, who served as African Elections Project team member on a number of countries in Southern and Western Africa and currently Consulting Project Manager: Media & Publicity at the Malawi Election Information Centre (MEIC) said "Twitter is becoming a mobilising tool; gathering various voices and enabling multiple conversations around processes etc. In my experience, Twitter becomes useful for people in the diaspora and not really, the locals, who prefer SMS or Whats App. This diaspora dimension adds perspective and encourages journalists to contextualise their stories and also give them valuable background information that would not ordinarily be there."

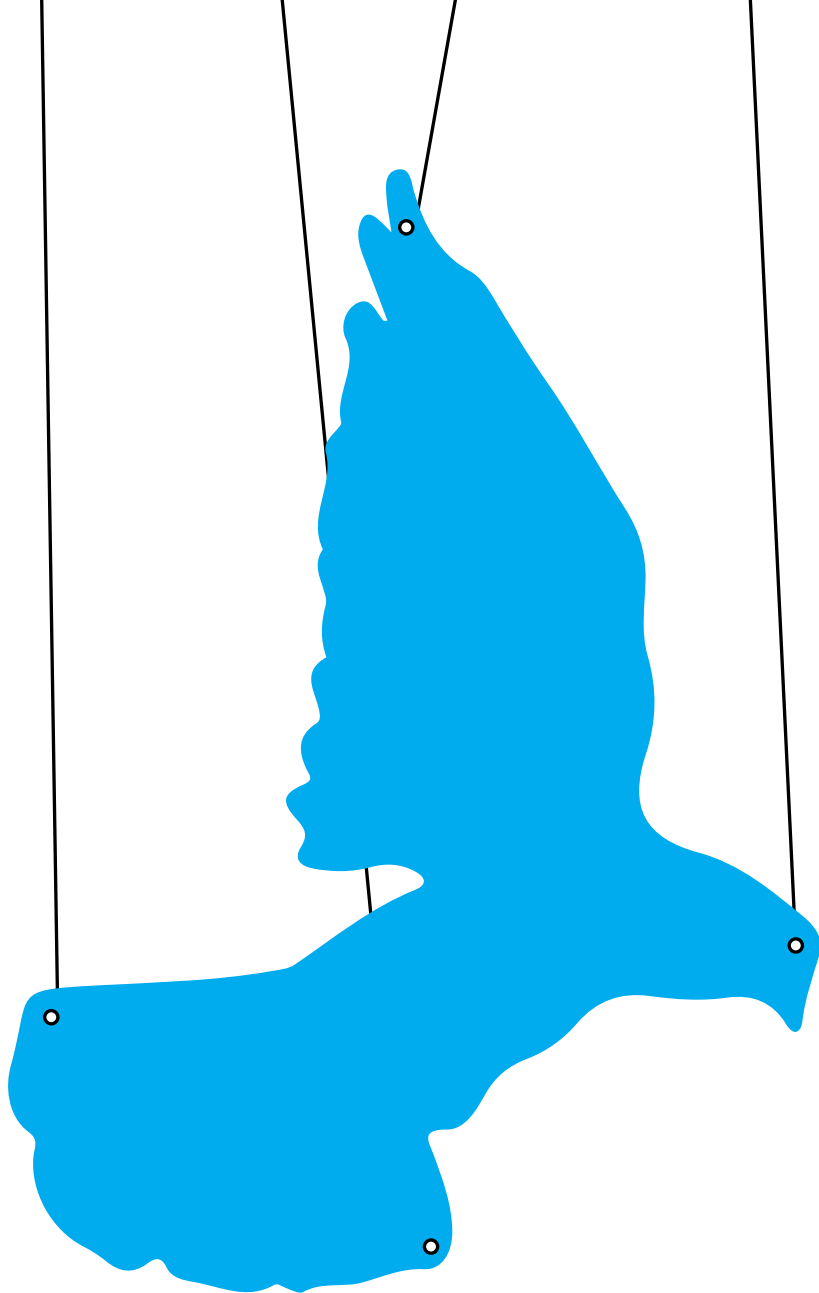
Remmy Nweke, Group Editor, DigitalSENSE Africa Media group based in Nigeria, is of the view that, twitter is very useful for getting direct quotes from voices, a tip or scoop on breaking stories., However, he added that twitter does not do much in term of news generation, though it gives one heads up at times, which requires follow up, so as to ascertain the facts or reconfirm the tweets. Nweke noted that most of the tweets are emotionally driven, hence journalists must confirm, if possible, beyond a given source before quoting them in their stories. Also, most media outlets are not exploring twitter. Due to very short time for follow up especially, they are hard press to meet deadlines.

Conclusion

Electoral democracy is spreading through Africa like bush fire with growing interest and participation of citizens., It is not usual to record extreme high voter turnout at polls with new digital technologies such as mobile phones, social media including twitter fueling citizens' engagement with the Electoral process. Though twitter media cannot be said to be highly influential due to lack of access at the grassroots level among other challenges, its positive impact is increasingly making it one of the fastest growing important tools in the fight for better elections by nations.



Mr. Kwami Ahiabenu, II is founder and president of the International Institute for ICT Journalism www.penplusbytes.org, an Accra-based organization that promotes journalistic innovation and professionalism across Africa through the effective use of information communication technologies (ICT). Under Mr. Ahiabenu's leadership, the Institute established the African Elections Project, www.africanelections.org which seeks to enhance the ability of mainstream media and citizen journalists to harness the power of ICT technologies to provide timely, relevant, and impartial election coverage and analysis. One of Ghana's foremost experts on information technology and democracy, Mr. Ahiabenu has conducted numerous ICT trainings for African journalists and has written extensively on a wide range of issues relating to the political uses of information technology, including mobile phones and development, microblogging, community radio, and social media. He is also involved in governance and economic accountability and transparency project aimed at strengthening media's monitoring role over the extractive sector in Ghana, Tanzania, Liberia and Uganda. Mr. Ahiabenu just completed Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship at National Endowment for Democracy www.ned.org where he undertook "'Using Technology to Promote Good Governance and Economic Transparency in West Africa" project



Earlier this year, a few unfortunate clicks revealed to the world that the Twitter account of Rwandan President Paul Kagame is run by the same person who spews pro-Rwanda propaganda under the handle @RichardGoldston. The faux Goldston is, of course, allowed to be a lot less guarded than Kagame himself, and a trawl through his Twitter cache offers up a few revelations – none of which are complimentary toward South Africa. No wonder SA-Rwanda relations are at an all-time low.

By Simon Allison

HOW TO SPREAD RWANDAN PROPAGANDA, & INTIMIDATE OPPONENTS?

Twitter, of course

The Internet is full of trolls. As journalists, ignoring them is a professional necessity – all that anonymous hate and vitriol is kryptonite to the self-confidence of any writer. But trolling is only as effective as it is anonymous; out of the shadows, the troll suddenly becomes accountable.

And so it is with a certain sense of schadenfreude that we at the Daily Maverick have been following the story of @RichardGoldston, a troll whose mask slipped in spectacular fashion last week. During an unpleasant Twitter argument with the academic Laura Seay (@texasinafrica), online observers were shocked when Rwandan President Paul Kagame (@PaulKagame) suddenly joined in the debate, seeming to pick up from where Goldston left off. Then Kagame's tweets were suddenly deleted, and @RichardGoldston went into hiding. The implication was obvious: whoever controls @RichardGoldston also has access to @PaulKagame.

In the wake of the scandal, Kagame's office (@UrugwiroVillage) confirmed the connection: "@RichardGoldston was an unauthorised account run by an employee in the Presidency. It has been deleted and the staff member reprimanded."

And yet, questions linger. Who was the employee in question? How much did Kagame know? And

Human Rights Watch, the rights organization that has published a number of critical reports of Kagame's administration, also comes in for abuse.

how closely did the vociferously pro-Rwanda views expressed by "Goldston" reflect Kagame's opinions? It is difficult to believe that someone trusted to run the President's twitter account would hold views widely divergent from the president himself – especially in Rwanda, a country renowned for its tight control over public relations.

"It's impossible to know how close these tweets mirror Kagame's or others in Kigali. But the views expressed by Goldston are an exact representation of the views Kigali's critics have long suspected them of having," said Steve Terrill, a freelance journalist and long-time Rwanda observer. Terrill is the person who initially connected the "Goldston" account with Kagame's office, raising concerns with the Rwandan Presidency as early as January. And he's paid the price, too: over the weekend he was detained in Kigali Airport and refused entry to Rwanda on spurious drug charges, forced to abandon a planned trip to cover the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

"No one in the [Government of Rwanda] is allowed to say things using their real names," said Terrill. "There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that Kagame knew about and approved of this account. [Paul Kagame's] office lied when they said this one unauthorized account. It's worth noting that not one media person within Rwanda mentioned this incident in their reporting. In any other country this would have been huge news."

Although the @RichardGoldston account was deleted, Terrill shared with the Daily Maverick his cache of tweets made by the account over the last two years. In light of what has happened, they certainly make for interesting reading (apologies in advance for the spelling and grammar. We haven't changed a thing).

Of particular relevance, given the recent crisis in diplomatic relations between South Africa and Rwanda, is @RichardGoldston's thoughts on South Africa. President Zuma, look away now. The South African President comes in for a lot of stick as a power-hungry, mineral-grabbing buffoon, with "Goldston" taking particular delight at the booing at Nelson Mandela's funeral.

"Whats sad is not that #Mandela has passed on, whats sad is that he died at a time SA is in the hands of a black retard #MadibaMemorial," he commented on December 10. Ouch. A few months earlier, he had blamed Zuma entirely for the difficulties in the SA-

Rwanda relationship: "SA relationship with Rwanda ends with Zuma as a person & his interests in DRC, once gone, it will be over". Oddly, this echoes comments made recently to the Daily Maverick by South African diplomats, who said that their problem was not with Rwanda per se but with "cowboy" Kagame himself.

South Africa's military presence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo – there are 1,345 SANDF personnel there as part of the Force Intervention Brigade, a United Nations peacekeeping mission with an offensive mandate – is obviously a sore point, and is brought up repeatedly by "Goldston". "tz [Tanzania] and SA don't have good intentions, they r protecting interests" he says on 1 May. And then this on 31 October: "zuma, [Tanzanian President Jakaya] kikwete, the whole world will crave for DRC wealth, so expect no peace soon".

As we have observed before, South Africa and Rwanda are effectively fighting a proxy war in the DRC; South Africa has engaged in active combat on behalf of the government, while Rwanda is allegedly supporting the M23 rebels that were the target of a successful government/FIB offensive last year. It is inconceivable that this is not a factor in the current diplomatic spat, and it is revealing that at least one senior figure in Kagame's office harbours such active animosity towards both Zuma and South Africa itself; it is not a stretch to imagine that he is not the only one in the upper echelons of the Rwandan government to feel this way.

Having said that, "Goldston" might have a point here. The role of South African commercial interests in the DRC has yet to be fully explored, but we do know that Zuma's nephew Khulubuse owns a couple of mines in the area. Coincidence? It's worth investigating.

South Africa is not, of course, the only target of "Goldston's" attacks. Human Rights Watch, the rights organization that has published a number of critical reports of Kagame's administration, also comes in for abuse. This is "Goldston" on the latest HRW report on Rwanda, in a tweet addressed to HRW Executive Director Ken Roth: "The use of the word 'investigation' is embarrassing for this particular report, you do little to conceal bias, mediocrity." And then: "Its high time the international community reigned-in #HRW as a partisan player in the #DRC conflict, reports could escalate the situation."

Even more revealing is how "Goldston" frequently

slips into ethnic and tribal slurs. With Rwanda's dark history, this is perhaps hardly surprising; but it does run contrary to the Rwandan government's commitment to a post-ethnic polity. As the New York Times explained in 2004:

"Ethnicity has already been ripped out of schoolbooks and rubbed off government identity cards. Government documents no longer mention Hutu or Tutsi, and the country's newspapers and radio stations, tightly controlled by the government, steer clear of the labels as well."

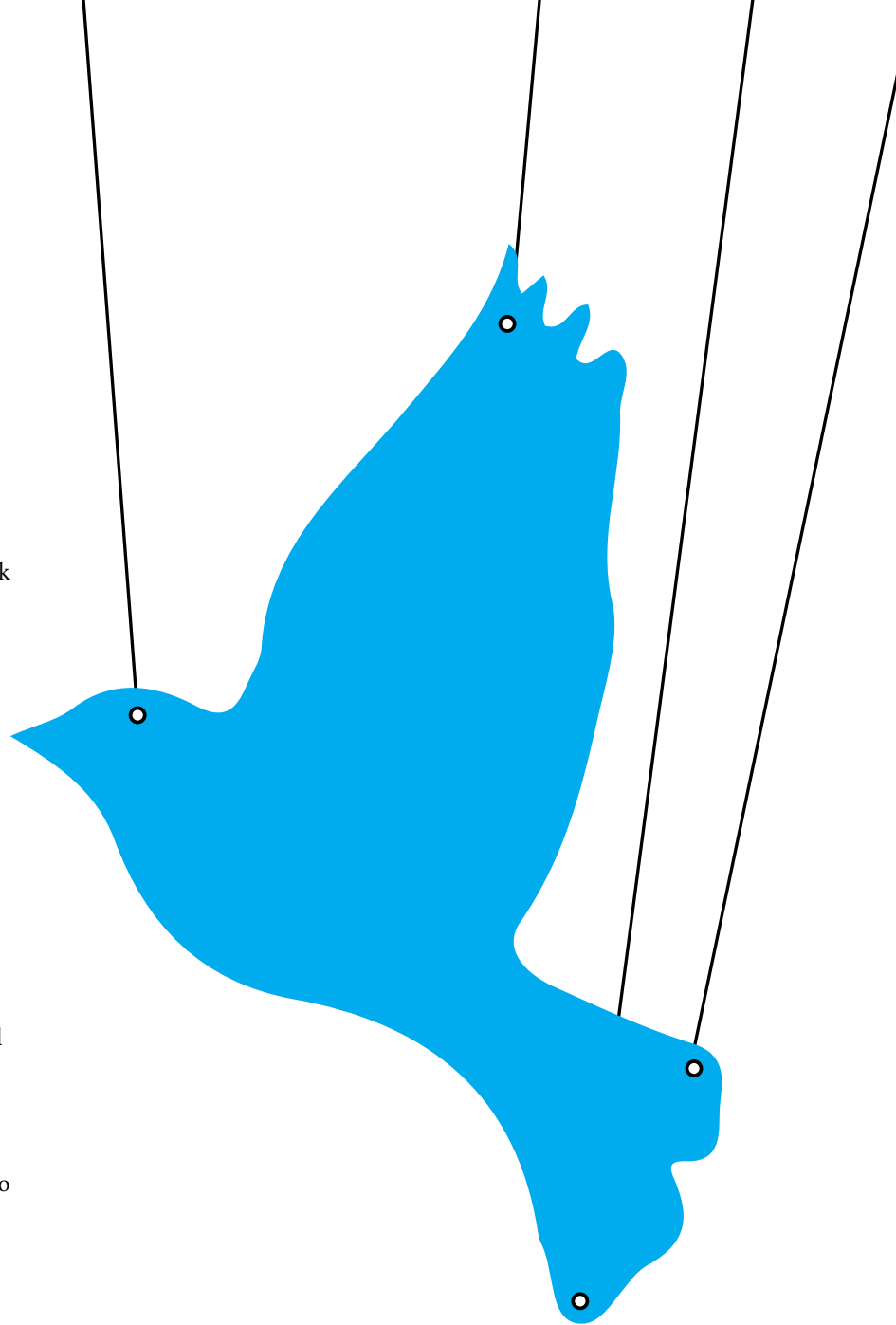
Despite this, a senior figure in the presidency – a man with access to the President's twitter account, no less – seems to view the conflict in neighbouring DRC in essentialist ethnic terms. "Using Tz and South Africa by France under the guise of UN to silence Tutsi grievances in Congo won't result in peace but pile more conflict," he said on 18 November. And this on 16 April: "Have hutus called for dialogue? on what leverage? hevae they confessed their hatred and genocide?"

It's a familiar narrative of downtrodden Tutsis and raging, blood-thirsty Hutus – but it's a narrative that the new Rwanda is supposed to have moved beyond. Nonetheless, these ethnic divisions appear to be alive and well in the president's office.

However you look at it, the @RichardGoldston scandal is a disaster for the Rwandan government. Perhaps he was a loose cannon, but then how was he allowed so much access? More likely is that the @RichardGoldston account, and others like it, form part of a deliberate social media strategy to spread Rwandan propaganda, and intimidate opponents.

"Kigali runs a sophisticated social media propaganda machine. It is wrong to think that all of this is done by paid actors. There are plenty of people participating out of a sense of loyalty to the [ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front party] and a - probably mistaken - belief that nasty ad hominem attacks on anyone who doesn't read Kigali's script make their country look good," said Terrill.

With a few unfortunate clicks, @RichardGoldston lifted the façade on this operation – and gave us an unprecedented insight into the heart of the Presidency itself. The opinions and emotions expressed there certainly aren't diplomatic, but the world according to Kagame's troll reveals more about Rwanda than a dozen carefully-worded press releases ever could.

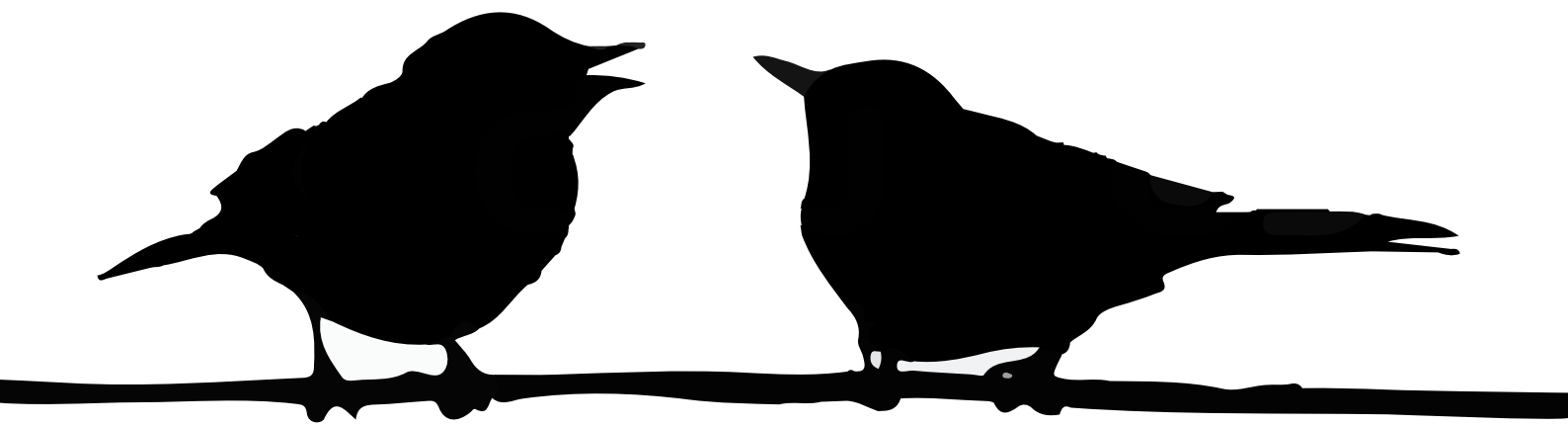


Read More:

- **A stray tweet may have exposed Paul Kagame's Twitter ghostwriter, and maybe much more on Washington Post**
- **SA to Rwanda: Don't touch us on our sovereignty on Daily Maverick**

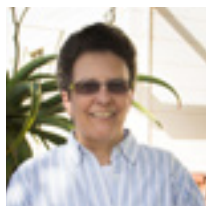
Simon Allison covers Africa for the Daily Maverick, having cut his teeth reporting from Palestine, Somalia and revolutionary Egypt. He loves news and politics, the more convoluted the better. Despite his natural cynicism and occasionally despairing tone, he is an Afro-optimist, and can't wait to witness and chronicle the continent's swift development over the next few decades.





BACKCHAT

Mindy McAdams



By Mvuzo Ponono

Mindy, thank you for agreeing to answer questions for the third edition of RJR Alive.

Mvuzo: So what is happening with Twitter? What is it about Twitter that has made a major impact? I am sure there are other social media platforms out there, but they are not as popular in journalism as this one. What is it about the technology that lends itself so well to journalism?

Mindy: The real beauty of Twitter as a platform for sharing news is the 140-character limit. This means you can scan it very quickly whenever you have a minute or two to spare. One of the bad developments is that now people can post images to Twitter. That slows us down. Fortunately, there are several apps that do not show the images, so we can still use those.

So the 140-character limit is a big factor - the short length makes it easy to can a lot of posts on Twitter very fast.

Also, the ability to follow people without asking their permission, and they don't have to follow you back. This makes Twitter the perfect way to follow many important news sources. You can create your own input stream and tailor it to your interests. For example, a few years ago I started to follow a lot of Indonesian journalists. But I found they mostly tweet in their own language, and I'm not fluent in Indonesian. So I unfollowed them - their tweets are not useful to me if I can't read them.

Also, unlike Facebook, in Twitter the stream is real-time. You don't see a tweet from two days ago at the top of your Twitter feed the way you always do on Facebook. Twitter is just better for news

Mvuzo: How has it changed the game (if at all)? Is it different in the developed world?

Mindy: Twitter has changed journalism a lot in North America, because Twitter is where news breaks. When something new happens, most news addicts learn about it first on Twitter. As a result, it's become very important for journalists to quickly post a short version of a story on their news organization's website and then immediately post a link on Twitter. Only after that is done can they write out a script for broadcast or a complete version for print.

According to a recent academic study, these are the top 10

countries for Twitter use per capita, in order: Kuwait, Netherlands, Brunei, UK, USA, Chile, Ireland, Canada, Sweden, Puerto Rico. (Except that Puerto Rico is NOT a country, but that's what the report said.)

Figure 1 and 2 are two graphs from the report. The data are from 2012.

The differences in the developing world depend on the popularity of Twitter in each country. In China, for example, they have their own version of Twitter, called Sina Weibo, and it's immensely popular there.

Mvuzo: In a recent seminar at Rhodes University you made an example of a Mail and Guardian online Marikana package as a bad example of an interactive, multimedia packages. The question thus, is whether South African journalism is using Twitter and new media technology effectively. If they aren't, as is the case with the Marikana story, what could they be doing differently? Is it a matter of training or competency, or is it much more than that?

Mindy: Here you are really comparing apples and oranges - because Twitter and an interactive, multimedia journalism story have almost nothing in common -- except that journalists can use them or create them.

But it is fair to ask if South African journalists are using various digital tools and online media effectively. I guess the answer is that there seems to be a lack of digital expertise in the SA media houses. But we cannot blame the journalists for that, because the bosses of the media houses first need to see the future of media and make a commitment to evolution. If they do not, they will die like the dinosaurs, and new, fast, small little creatures like the early mammals (our own ancestors) will take over the media world. Facebook and Twitter once were small and new. So was Google when it started.

I do not mean to say the responsibility lies only with the media bosses and the big SA companies. The individual journalists have power in their own hands because of small and cheap digital technologies. It costs nothing to become a significant voice in the world of blogs, but it does require vision, integrity, ideas, and devotion. You cannot be the kind of person who waits for your boss you give you permission. You have to take responsibility for finding out what is possible, and then teaching yourself how to do what is possible -- and then just DOING it.

In answer to the second part, I have to say I don't know. I have not yet followed any South African media on Twitter and so I have not seen how they use it.

Mvuzo: Is there a future beyond Twitter – what does it look like?

Mindy: Internet trends are ever changing. A few years ago, MySpace was the biggest thing online, and all the young people loved it. Then Facebook came along, and MySpace is basically dead. There have been other, similar examples. LiveJournal was a very popular blogging platform in the U.S. for a while, but it also fell by the wayside. So it's hard to guess if Twitter will be replaced by something else.

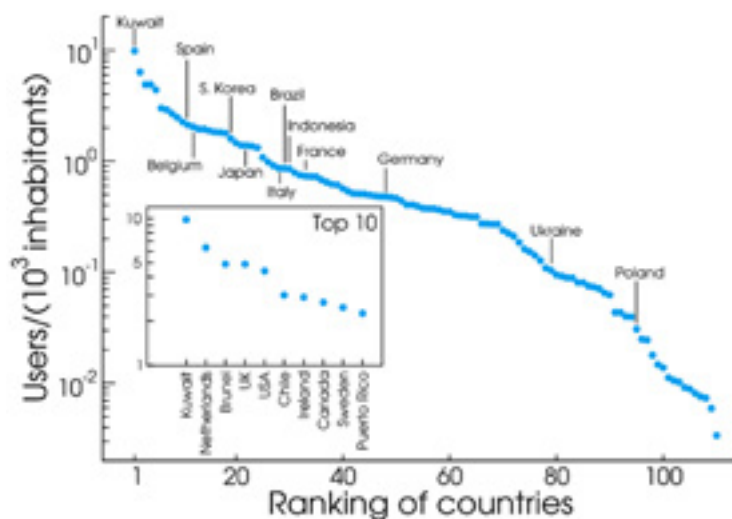


FIGURE 2: Ranking of countries by users per capita. Ranking of countries as per average number of Twitter users over a population of 1000 individuals.

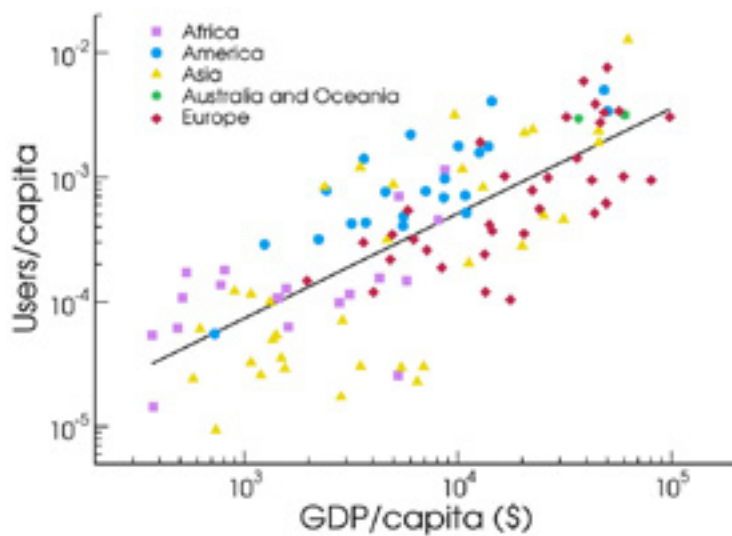


FIGURE 3: Users and GDP per capita. Correlation between country level Twitter penetration and GDP per capita.

Mvuzo Ponono is Xhosa man born in the Eastern Cape. He holds a Master's degree from Rhodes University





Social media practice **in Zimbabwe**

By **John Mkwetsi**

New media technologies have certainly transformed the newsroom cultures and practices. While the global south is usually associated with the late comer status when it comes to leveraging new media technologies, Zimbabwe is no different. The first internet connection was established in 1994 and then followed by email services in 1997. It was until the early 2000s that newsrooms joined the internet bandwagon although without intense resistance from journalists and editors. The digital transformation caught many newsmakers unaware in terms of possession of the required skills set and soft skills associated with computers.

Vincent Kahiya, the Editor in Chief of Alpha Media Holdings (AMH) (publishers of two weeklies and two daily paper in Zimbabwe loves to share a story about how some journalists in the 90s could not cope with the changes the computer brought to the newsroom.

“Top journalists quit the profession and moved on to other things because a computer was too much of a complicated device,” said Kahiya. “The typewriter was what they wanted and if someone was to change their routine it was time to leave and they did.”

The computer in the 90s in Zimbabwe was disruptive to the practice of journalism but this was only the beginning of more changes to come that have redefined workflow systems within newsrooms. The arrival of the internet ignited a rapid proliferation of new digital technologies that caught mainstream media offguard. But perhaps before zooming on the period of digital renaissance in 2012 using AMH as a case study, a bit of context is important.

Internet and Journalism

Zimbabwe had its first Internet Service Provider (ISP) in 1994 and AMH, that has four newspapers in its stable, was the first to have a newspaper website for their business weekly, The Zimbabwe Independent, in 1999. Back then little attention was given to packaging news for the online environment.

“In those days, we had to put our content on a floppy disc and give it to a service provider who designed the website for us for a fee that was not at all flattering,” explained Silent Kamambo, the AMH Business Manager for Digital Products. “We never sourced for adverts and no one among journalists really had interest.”

In 1999, website management was outsourced and very little attention was given to it the newsroom. Focus was on the print product which raked in the dollars. Other mainstream media houses in Zimbabwe did not have digital footprints and it is not hard to know why.

For news organizations steeped in an old modus operandi the internet phenomena was novel. Also, very few Zimbabweans had internet access which

gave credence to the concentration on the print medium. To complicate matters, journalism training remained stuck in the past.

The two major journalism institutions in Zimbabwe, The Harare Polytechnic and Christian College Southern Africa (CCOSA) have not reformed with the digital ecosystem that now permeates all facets of the new reader.

At CCOSA by 2005 journalism students were still being taught typing skills using the Remington typewriters. To this day there is no module that deals with digital media at the famed journalism school.

Joseph Katete, a journalist and Public relations officer recalls the training: “In 2003 I had no idea what Yahoo was. I did not have an email or a working idea of the Internet. We had to hammer those old typewriters with our fingers till they hurt for the two years I trained to be a journalist at CCOSA. The sad thing is that when I interned with a big media organisation life was so unbearable for me and many others coming from other colleges. We had to learn on the job from such basics as using Microsoft word to using search engines.”

Katete’s story is echoed by Moses Matenga, a news reporter with AMH who was at Harare Polytechnic and graduated in 2009: “The computers that had applications like the Internet were available made available to the fraternity in 2009 and it was the year I left the institution. I do not remember discussing social networks or social media and their impact on my usage of them in the newsroom. It had to take a lot of self-learning to understand new media. In house training that is now being media available to journalists is helping.”

Despite these challenges new technologies in the everyday life of journalism has offered journalists in the newsrooms unprecedented online opportunities, including new ways of generating story ideas, as well as engaging and cultivating sources on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

3G and the impact

During the much disputed Zimbabwean presidential election in 2008 the mobile phone was a critical gadget but most reporters depended on civil society bulk SMSes to track voting patterns.

Ordinary citizens also heavily used the same

In January 2014, Zimbabwe had reached 100% mobile penetration rate with current statistics stating that 5.2 million people have access to the internet a huge jump from only 50 000 in 2000.

platform to communicate on the happenings in their communities. Given a closed public sphere, this was the safest and trusted way to communicate.

But on 28 August 2009 there was a national digital renaissance that would be disruptive in the way news is consumed, shared and produced.

This was the launch of 3G technology that allowed subscribers to access internet on their mobile phones. A sim card that only the previous year cost \$US100 could now be bought for \$US1.

This downward spiral of prices of sim cards in large was necessitated by a Government of National Unity (GNU) that allowed a modicum of normalcy from the pre 2008 political and economic upheaval period. Zimbabwe dollarized its economy in 2009 to arrest the hyperinflationary environment.

The GNU established a Ministry of Information and Communications Technology to focus on ICT growth and development. One of the benefits of that ministry was the laying of fibre optic led by the biggest mobile service provider, Econet.

There was an ICT strategic plan that was set up and saw the scrapping of duty on ICT gadgets like tablets and mobile phones. In 2010 Zimbabwe's (population of 13 million) mobile penetration had jumped to 60% from just 13% in 2008.

In January 2014, Zimbabwe had reached 100% mobile penetration rate with current statistics stating that 5.2 million people have access to the internet a huge jump from only 50 000 in 2000.

The period after 2008 therefore marked the beginning of a different way of newsgathering and a moderate understanding of the digital journey the media was adapting to.

Hayes Mabweazara in his article titled Normative Dilemmas and Issues for Zimbabwean Print Journalism in the "Information Society" Era sums it when he writes: "Like the internet, the mobile phone has also assumed a central role in the dynamics of the journalists' daily routines. Journalists across the newsrooms studied collectively highlighted the extent to which the technology's portability has freed them from the necessity of physical proximity and the constraining demands of spatial immobility rooted in traditional modes of communication such as the fixed phone. For the journalists this, among other communicative potentialities inherent in

the mobile phone, has rendered the technology an indispensable part of their day-to-day work."

The modern Newsroom: Digital first In 2009 Alpha Media Holdings for the first time employed a web administrator with a journalism qualification. This did not mean that a lot had changed in terms of online content.

There was still the practice of shovelware and no specific workflow between the administrator and print editors.

This meant that there was no social media strategy and for the whole of that year no reporter contributed breaking news for the three websites. There were no social network accounts and advertising was minimal as most clients still preferred the print.

Most reporters though had started to use Facebook to source news and Google as a search tool compared to the dependence on paper clippings from the library. A senior editor said: "It is hard to convince reporters to start blogs. The usual excuse is that it is extra work and that it is something you are not paid for. The feeling is that websites were a 'you-should-have' tool that added not much value."

The owner of AMH, Trevor Ncube who also owns the Mail and Guardian in South Africa which has a legacy of being the first African newspaper to go online was instrumental in changing the mindset. In 2011 he employed an Online Editor and became the first to do so in Zimbabwe.

In 2012 I replaced that online editor and immediately Mabweazara writes about this period: "In 2011 both Zimpapers and Alpha Media Holdings hired Group Online Editors with a number of evolving responsibilities, including repurposing print content for the Web; using social media to engage and deliver content to their audiences; as well as filtering user-generated content emerging from their websites and readers' mobile phone SMS. Thus, while Zimbabwe has endured a lengthy period of under-investment as a result of a protracted political and economic crisis, it has a relatively reliable telecommunications infrastructure that makes the newsrooms above "part of the global information society dream." For AMH 2012 was the year of real change as the group adopted the digital first strategy and put more emphasis on

equipping their reporters in use of social media. Being part of the team we introduced live blogging of events which proved to be a popular real time journalism tool readers appreciated. Despite the cost of internet (what is the cost) in Zimbabwe we introduced multimedia and the audio and video hosted on Soundcloud and YouTube and the response has been good. All journalists understand the importance of time and being the first with the story in online reporting hence the use of mobile messaging apps like Whatsapp to file stories from the field. This innovative use of mobile phones by AMH to live update and record videos as well as audio was recognised by Highway Africa/Telkom in 2013 as one of the titles under the stable, NewsDay was awarded an award for being innovative in their use of new media. Whereas the Online department had one person running it for two years between 2008 and early 2011 now it employs five people and is making more money than one of the weeklies in the stable. The department is even complemented by its own sales and marketing personnel. The digital first strategy has meant that every reporter is on Twitter and Facebook. But how are reporters using these tools. Currently AMH is embarking on newsrooms convergence and investing in gadgets that advance the digital media direction it has embarked.

Twitter and Facebook in the Newsroom

Most reporters spend more time on Facebook than Twitter. Twitter is still such an intimidating animal to Zimbabwean journalists and the uptake of its use is slow in newsrooms.

One factor that has contributed to its slow uptake is high cost of data in Zimbabwe and the lack of will by employers to assist their newsroom staff in having cheaper data connection on phones and other personal gadgets. There are more conversations on Facebook rather than twitter. The only twitter platform we have had so far in Zimbabwe creating more conversations is 263chat.

Twitter is high on pushing and sharing web content. NewsDay has the largest following among mainstream media with about 35 000 followers but most of the reader engagement happens on Facebook where 287 000 converge to share opinion and current affairs.

A senior political journalist from AMH says: "I know that Twitter is more helpful for what we do as journalists but I find it to be technical and that most of the sources in Zimbabwe have Facebook pages than Twitter handles. I however use Twitter to share the stories I write. I do not have many followers and the scrolling news every second on my feeds is rather disruptive."

Kahiya however said as AMH policy every reporter is expected to be active on Twitter and to share the company's content.

"We understand that we do not have digital natives among our journalists but the reason why according to Opera we have the most accessed website in Zimbabwe in NewsDay is because in our digital first strategy that we adopted and vigorously pursue, social networks are such an important element because they drive our traffic. All editors are expected to be on Twitter. It is policy."

He added: "However, when it comes down to how Twitter is then being used we notice that engagement is still a problem and understanding the use of hashtags and other elements of the Twitter sphere needs training and we are investing in that."

He is optimistic in pointing out that Zimbabwe has advanced and the consumption of local content that saw the country as the only one in Africa with four local websites in the Opera report on mobile phone traffic-shows that everyone now understands where the reader is.

"In a year, we will not be talking about the use of Twitter and Facebook in newsrooms because we have made noticeable strides," Kahiya concludes. "Rather we will talk about a renaissance in digital journalism that will be a case study for Africa."

John Mokwetsi, an award winning journalist, is the Online Editor of AMH, He holds a MA in Digital Media from Sussex University.





7-8 September • Rhodes University • Grahamstown • South Africa

HIGHWAY AFRICA CONFERENCE 2014

CONCEPT DOCUMENT

Background

The Highway Africa Conference is hosted by Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies in partnership with Corporate South Africa, development agencies and media associations.

For seventeen years the Highway Africa conference has been at the centre of Africa's debates on journalism, media and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The conference has over the years become the largest annual gathering of African journalists in the world.

Conference Theme

The 2014 conference has the theme – **Social Media – from the margins to the mainstream**. The two-day event will explore how social media have impacted on all aspects of our lives in the last ten years.

We would like to understand:

- What has been the impact of social media on journalism as practice and media as business?
- How have social media impacted on our consumption of media e.g. television?
- How have ordinary citizens and CSOs used social media in advocacy, mobilisation and other activities?
- How have social media enabled the rise of the individual's voice outside of the mediation of mainstream media?
- How have governments and politicians used social media to communicate with a variety of constituencies?
- How do identities (gender, race, ethnic, linguistic etc) play out in cyberspace?
- How is sovereignty and the concept of the nation challenged or affirmed by social media?

Rationale

The birth of social media promised much in terms of a new dawn of democratization of communication. Social media would subvert the relations between producers and consumers of discourses. The people formerly called the audience would now occupy digital spaces and talk back to power. They would create their own content to rival that of the incumbent gate-keepers; they would hold their own conversations and hold vested interests (government, corporates) accountable via scrutiny of the use/abuse of power.

With the internet, mobile technology and social media having become a seamless part of social life, has this original idealism and valorization of digital technologies come to pass? Has the internet, and the applications built on it, become instead, one large communications network that deprives individuals of privacy and renders them vulnerable to both abusive states and criminal gangs?

These are some of the questions that we would like to explore at the 18th Highway Africa Conference.

Conference Format

Using plenary sessions, keynote addresses, panel discussions, training workshops, book launches and networking dinners, HA 2014 will be yet another occasion for reflection on the role technology is playing in shaping journalism and the media in society.

The conference will have 4 distinctive tracks that seek to cater for the different constituencies:

- Youth: sessions geared towards journalism and media students;
- Community: sessions geared towards the community media practitioner
- Academic: sessions geared towards the journalism and media researcher (this will include presentation of peer-reviewed papers)
- Professional: sessions geared towards the practicing journalist, editor or media manager.

The above tracks will speak to the following topics:

- Newsrooms and social media
- Civil Society and social media
- Rise of the Individual Voice
- The nation, sovereignty, identity and social media
- Governance, government, politics and social media
- Marketing, Advertising and social media
- Entertainment (music, games, movies) and social media
- Surveillance and censorship and freedom of expression, security and privacy

Participation in the conference

Registration for the conference opens on 1 June and closes on 31 July.

Registration fees are as follows:

Professional journalist	R3000 (US\$300)
Academic/researcher	R1500 (US\$150)
Community media practitioner	R1500 (US\$150)
Tertiary education student	R900 (US\$90)

The above fee covers conference materials, group meals, local transport, training workshops.

The registration fee does NOT cover airport transfers and accommodation.

For the first time in the history of this conference there will be a call for papers for the academic track of the event. Please check our website www.highwayafrica.com for details.

For further enquiries please contact Chris Kabwato: C.Kabwato@ru.ac.za



RHODES UNIVERSITY



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