

101 things brands should know about Twitter

*Middle East & North Africa Customer Service & Twitter
Survey - February 2010*

Published 29 March 2010

By Carrington Malin, Spot On Public Relations

carringtonm@spotonpr.com

[@carringtonmalin](https://twitter.com/carringtonmalin)

[@spotonpr](https://twitter.com/spotonpr)

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Summary

It's now well publicised that the rapid growth Twitter experienced during 2008 and the first months of 2009 slowed dramatically towards the end of 2009, although ending the year with 75 million user accounts. Twitter activity, on the other hand, grew from 5,000 tweets per day in 2007 to 300,000 by 2008 and 2.5 million tweets per day in 2009. Figures released by Twitter in February 2010 registered 50 million tweets per day (or an average of 600 tweets per second). No such figures are available for the Middle East & North Africa, but activity on Twitter has visibly increased over the past year and overall user numbers have also grown. Spot On estimates that there are currently 35,000-40,000 registered Twitter users in the region compared with a mere 3,000 users in March 2009.

Corporate activity in the MENA Twittersphere has grown too, with an estimated 400 brands represented on Twitter in the region including companies, government departments, NGOs and non-profit organizations (more than 300 can be tracked via one of Spot On's Twitter lists). Spot On Public Relations conducted the first major MENA Twitter habits and demographics survey in August 2009. In light of the growing commercial interest in Twitter and social media in the MENA region, Spot On carried out a customer service and Twitter survey in February 2010. About 1,000 active Twitter users across the region were invited to take part in the survey and 174 users completed the survey in its entirety.

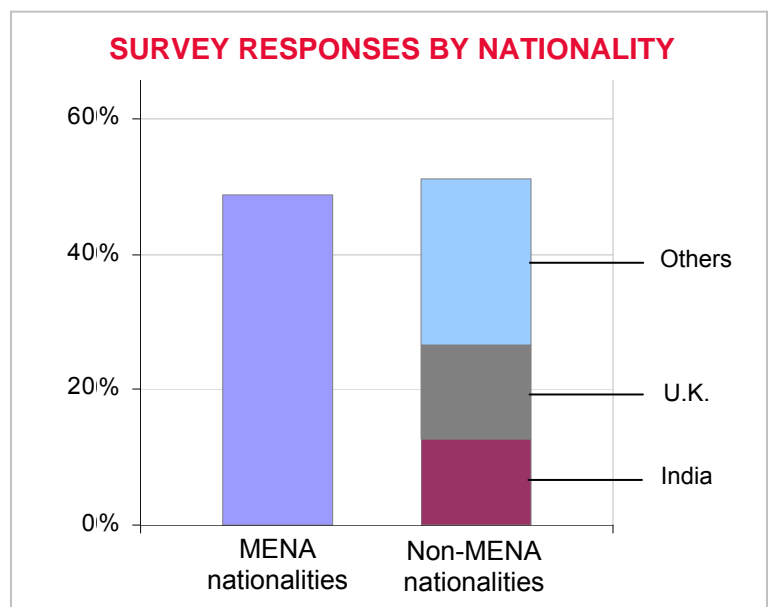
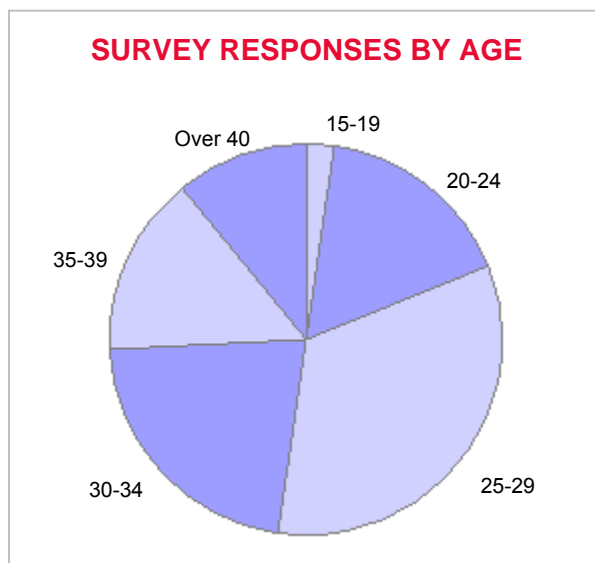
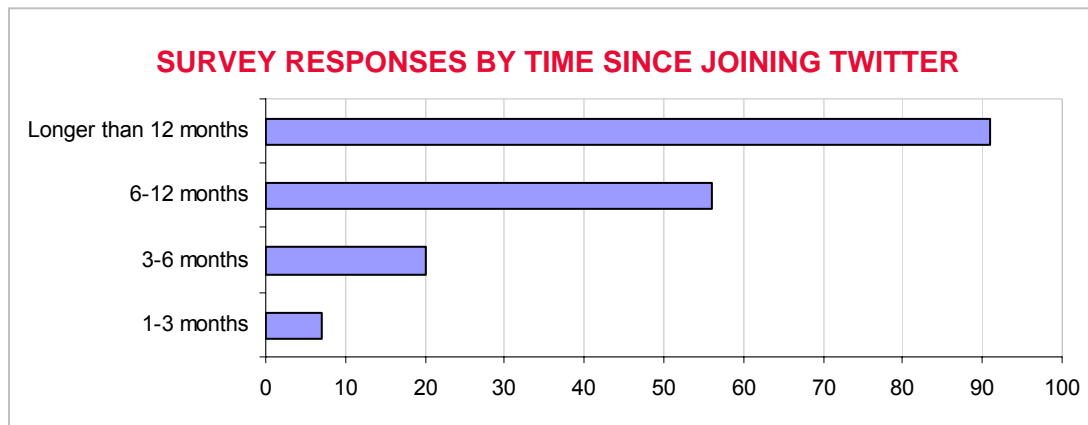
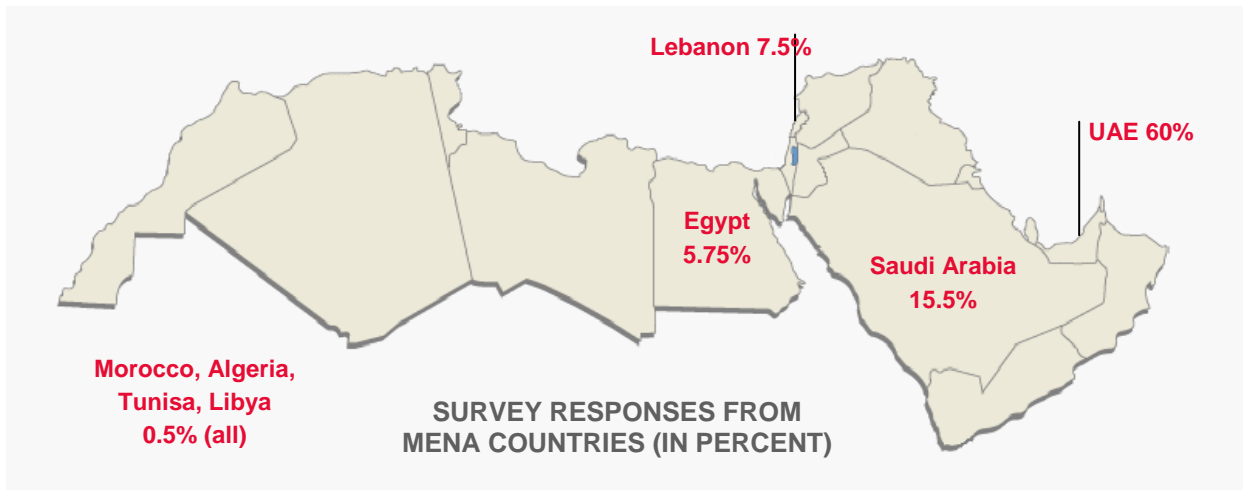
Here are some of our survey's key findings:

- 95% of respondents welcomed brand engagement via Twitter
- 87% of those surveyed said that Twitter had affected their perception of a brand or company (up from 61% in our August 2009 survey)
- 50% of those surveyed had received customer service via Twitter
- 50% of the survey had purchased a product or service as a result of Twitter
- 65% of respondents were interested in receiving special offers & coupons from brands on Twitter
- 82% admitted a preference for brands that they knew via Twitter that affected their purchasing
- 88% of those surveyed said that they would recommend a brand based on their experience on Twitter

All respondents were also asked to give one piece of advice to brands using Twitter. 101 Twitter users out of 174 contributed advice from their experience on Twitter. We highly recommend any brand that is using Twitter or considering using Twitter to read their advice and take it to heart.

Who responded?

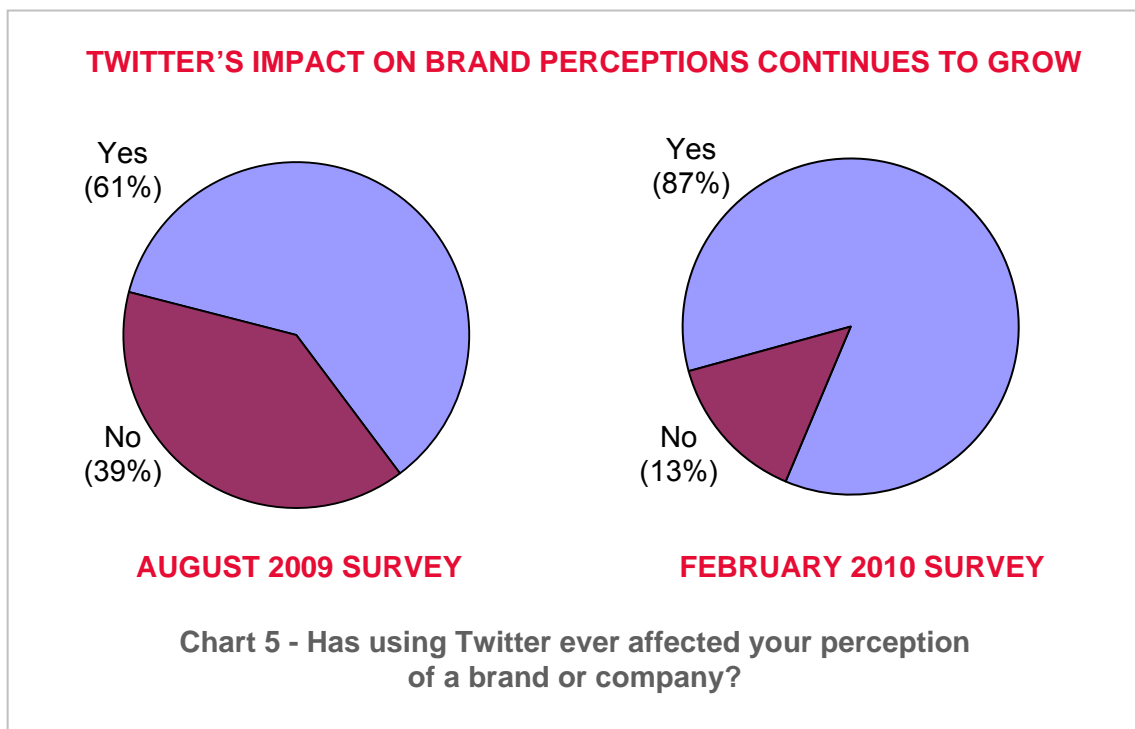
Spot On PR invited about 1,000 Twitter users from across the Middle East and Africa to take part in this survey. 177 Twitter users completed the entire survey during February 2010, of which 174 were based in MENA. Invitations to take part in this survey and survey responses are weighted towards UAE Twitter users, as is overall Twitter use in the region. 84% had been using Twitter more than 6 months.



Above: charts 1, 2, 3 & 4 (anticlockwise)

Brand perceptions

Spot On's August 2009 survey revealed that 61% of MENA Twitter users surveyed believed that using Twitter had affected their perception of brands or companies. The first survey was taken just one year after the UAE began allowing access to Twitter and six or seven months after the high growth phase of Twitter adoption across the region began, so it is perhaps no surprise to see that the influence of Twitter on brand perceptions has grown over the past six months. In our February 2010 survey, nearly 90% admitted that Twitter had affected their perceptions of people and / or brands.



February's answers to related questions about Twitter's influence on positive or negative perceptions about brands or companies, showed similar changes. 85.5% of respondents stated that they had formed a more positive perception of a brand or company as a result of using Twitter and 68% stated that they had formed a negative perception of a brand or company as a result of using Twitter. These compare with 70% and 52% in Spot On's August 2009's survey.

Twitter users share both positive and negative brand experiences

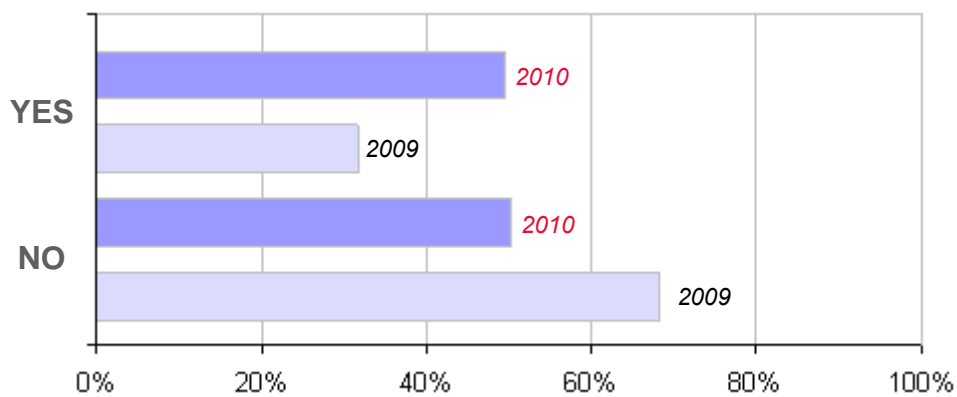
Almost 100% of survey respondents stated that they are likely to share positive experiences they have with a brand via Twitter: and they are just as likely to share negative brand experiences.

Products & buying

The majority of those surveyed stated that Twitter had helped them find out about a new product or service via Twitter and that they had recommend a product or service to someone else as a result of using Twitter. Significantly, 50% of those surveyed had purchased a product or service as a result of using Twitter. This compares to 32% that admitted to purchasing as a result of Twitter in Spot On's August 2009 survey.

Chart 6.1: Have you ever bought a product or service as a result of using Twitter?

50% OF THE SURVEY HAVE PURCHASED AS A RESULT OF TWITTER



Customer service

Despite the relatively low numbers of brands represented on Twitter in the Middle East and North Africa, 50% of respondents to the survey admitted that they had received customer service from a brand or company via Twitter. More than 50% of the survey had personally requested customer service assistance via Twitter and 36% had been proactively contacted by brands using Twitter about customer service issues.

53% HAVE ASKED A BRAND ON TWITTER FOR 'CUSTOMER SERVICE'

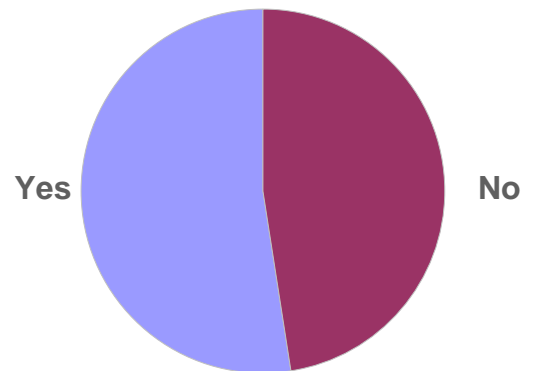


Chart 7.1: Have you ever contacted an organization or brand via Twitter about a customer service issue?

Much has been written about the new opportunities that social media offers to customer relationship management (CRM). In the MENA region there are still relatively few brands that use Twitter day-to-day to engage with customers and the corporate Twitter users quoted in the region's media are invariably the same. However, the fact that 36% of respondents have already proactively been offered customer service over Twitter by brands does seem to show that some brands are actively monitoring Twitter and using the platform to help their customers rather than viewing Twitter as simply a promotion.

36% HAVE BEEN PROACTIVELY CONTACTED BY A BRAND ON TWITTER ABOUT A 'CUSTOMER SERVICE' ISSUE

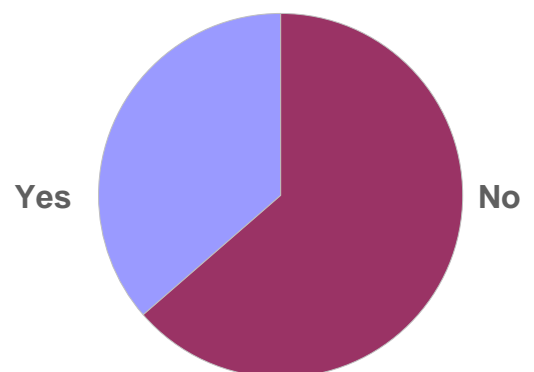


Chart 7.2: Have you ever been proactively contacted by an organisation or brand via Twitter about a customer service issue?

The survey asked Twitter users which channels they preferred to use to request customer service. The most popular channels were via email, website, Twitter or telephone. As many Twitter users are now as likely to contact a brand via Twitter as they are by telephone.

TWITTER USERS ARE AS LIKELY TO USE TWITTER TO CONTACT BRANDS AS THEY ARE TO USE THE TELEPHONE

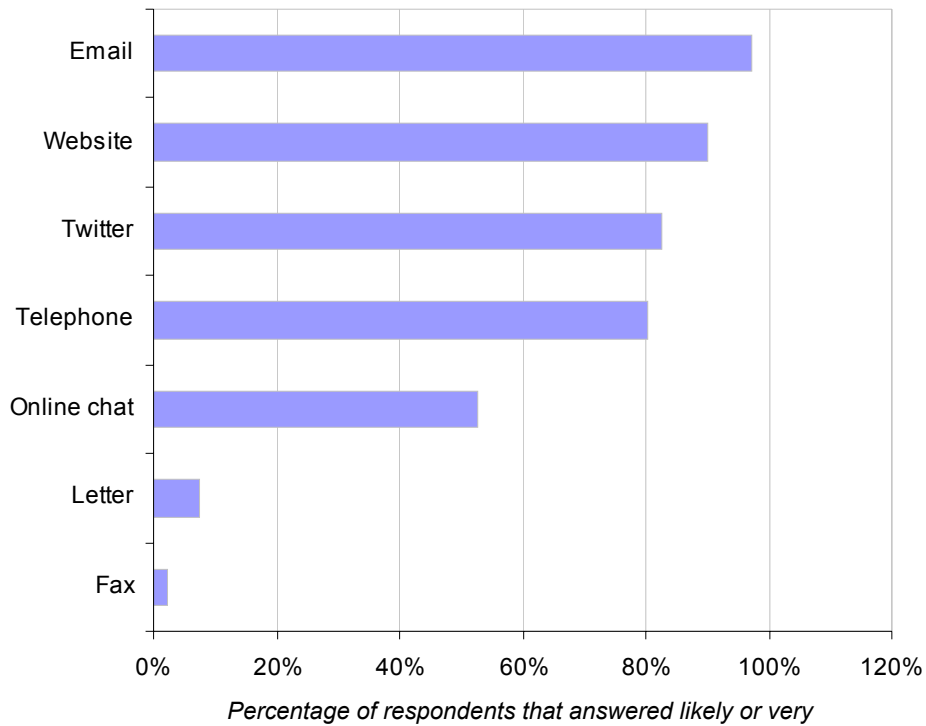


Chart 8: How likely are you to use each of the following channels to make your first request for a brand or organisation’s customer service/support?

Attitudes towards brands

There was a fair amount of negative feeling about companies using Twitter a year or two ago, but clearly not in the MENA region. 95% of respondents to our survey felt that brands should engage their customers on Twitter. This doesn't take away from the fact that more people stated that they had formed a negative opinion about a brand as a result of Twitter than Spot On's August 2009 survey, but it does indicate that there is an opportunity for brands on Twitter if they act appropriately and build trust.

95% OF RESPONDENTS WELCOME BRAND ENGAGEMENT VIA TWITTER

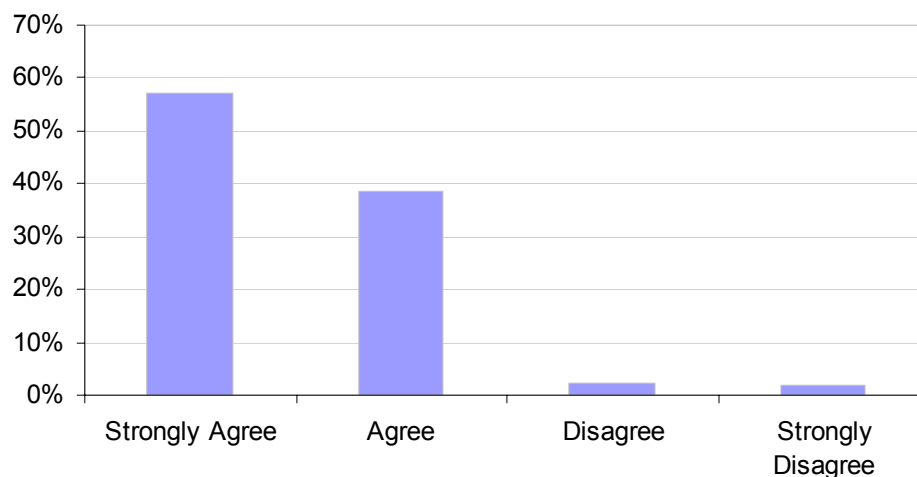


Chart 10: I feel brands should engage with their customers on Twitter

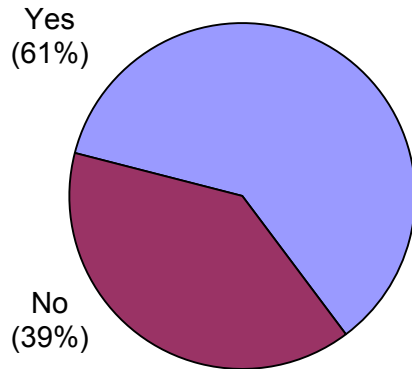
And here's some more good news for brands on Twitter. Most Twitter users surveyed seem to have developed a measure of preference for brands that they interact with on Twitter and openly admit that this preference influences their buying decisions.

- 65% are interested in receiving special offers and coupons from brands on Twitter.
- 88% would recommend a brand based on their Twitter experience.
- 82% would be more willing to purchase from a brand that has a relationship with them on Twitter.

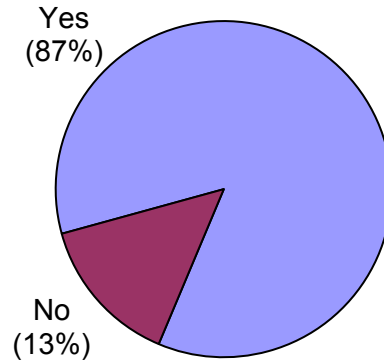
Results in full

Here are the results for all the February 2010 survey's multiple choice questions.

TWITTER'S IMPACT ON BRAND PERCEPTIONS CONTINUES TO GROW

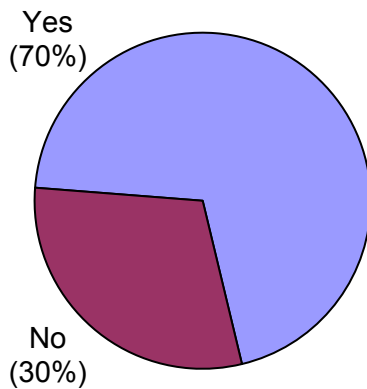


AUGUST 2009 SURVEY

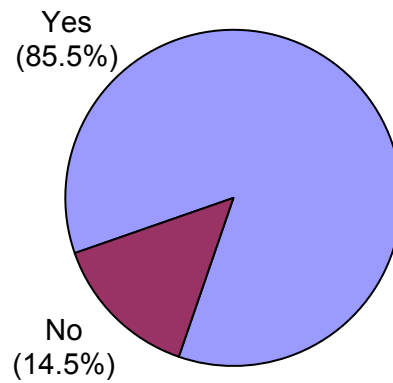


FEBRUARY 2010 SURVEY

Chart 5 (above) - Has using Twitter ever affected your perception of a brand or company?

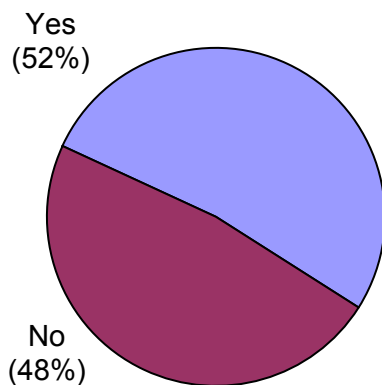


AUGUST 2009 SURVEY

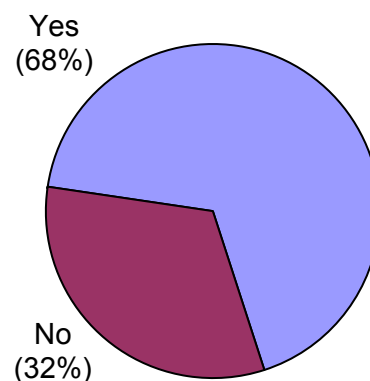


FEBRUARY 2010 SURVEY

Chart 5.1 (above) - Have you ever formed a *more positive* perception of a brand or company as a result of using Twitter?

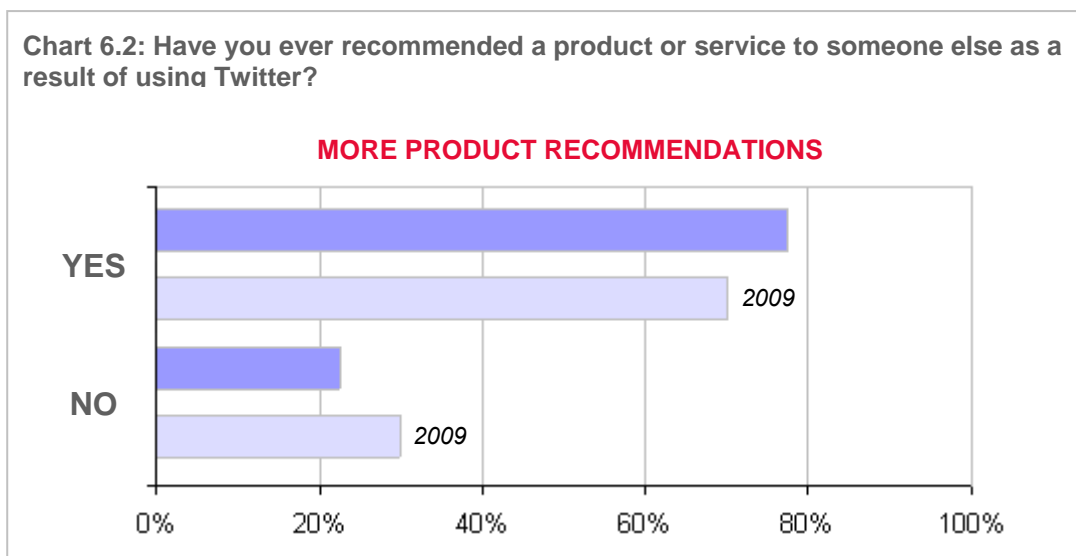
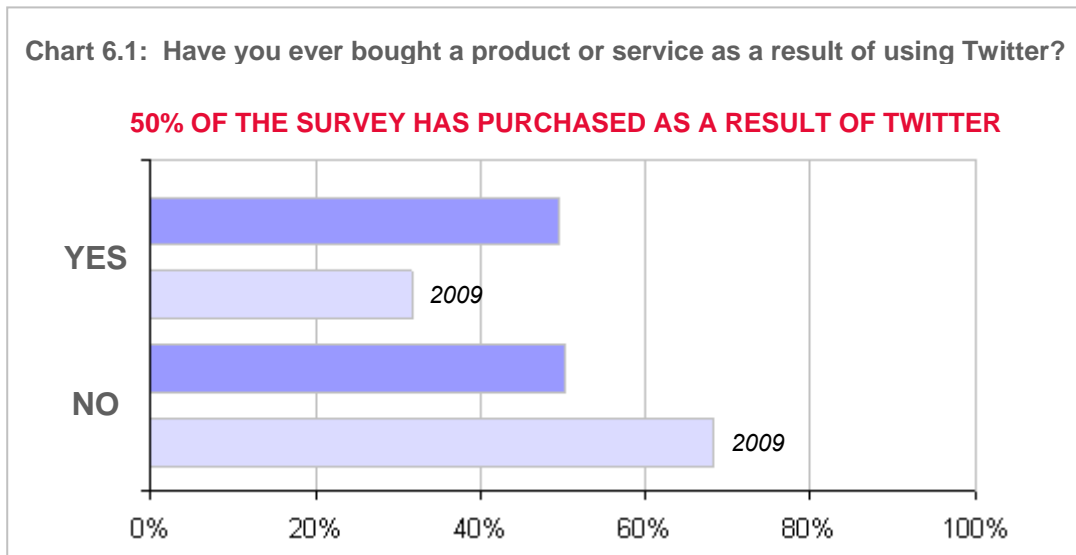
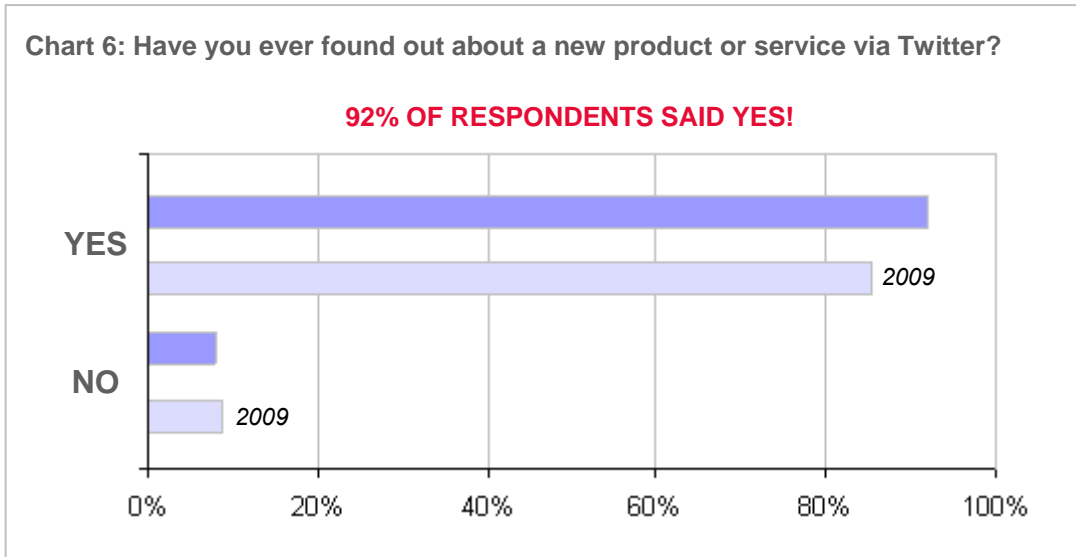


AUGUST 2009 SURVEY



FEBRUARY 2010 SURVEY

Chart 5.2 (above) - Have you ever formed a *more negative* perception of a brand or company as a result of using Twitter?



50% HAVE RECEIVED 'CUSTOMER SERVICE' VIA TWITTER

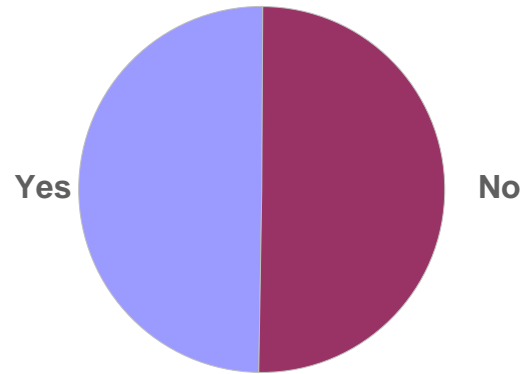


Chart 7: Have you ever experienced an issue with a product or service and received help from the organization responsible via Twitter?

53% HAVE ASKED A BRAND ON TWITTER FOR 'CUSTOMER SERVICE'

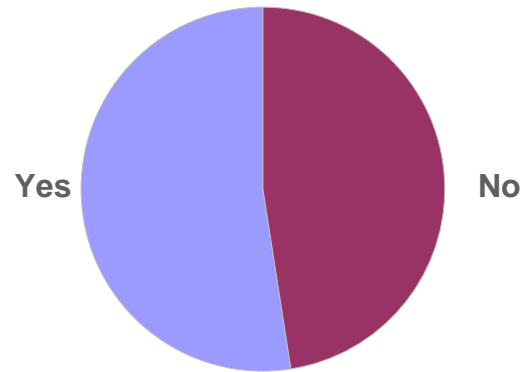


Chart 7.1: Have you ever contacted an organization or brand via Twitter about a customer service issue?

36% HAVE BEEN PROACTIVELY CONTACTED BY BRAND ON TWITTER ABOUT A 'CUSTOMER SERVICE' ISSUE

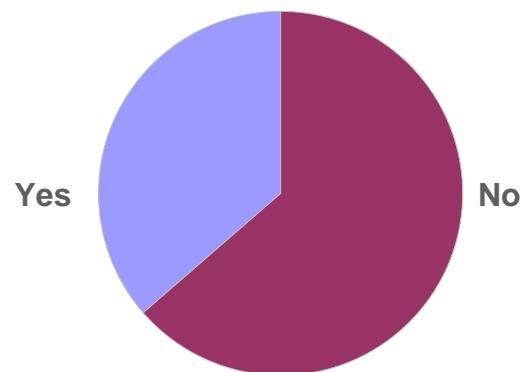


Chart 7.2: Have you ever been proactively contacted by an organisation or brand via Twitter about a customer service issue?

TWITTER USERS ARE AS LIKELY TO USE TWITTER TO CONTACT BRANDS AS THEY ARE TO USE THE TELEPHONE

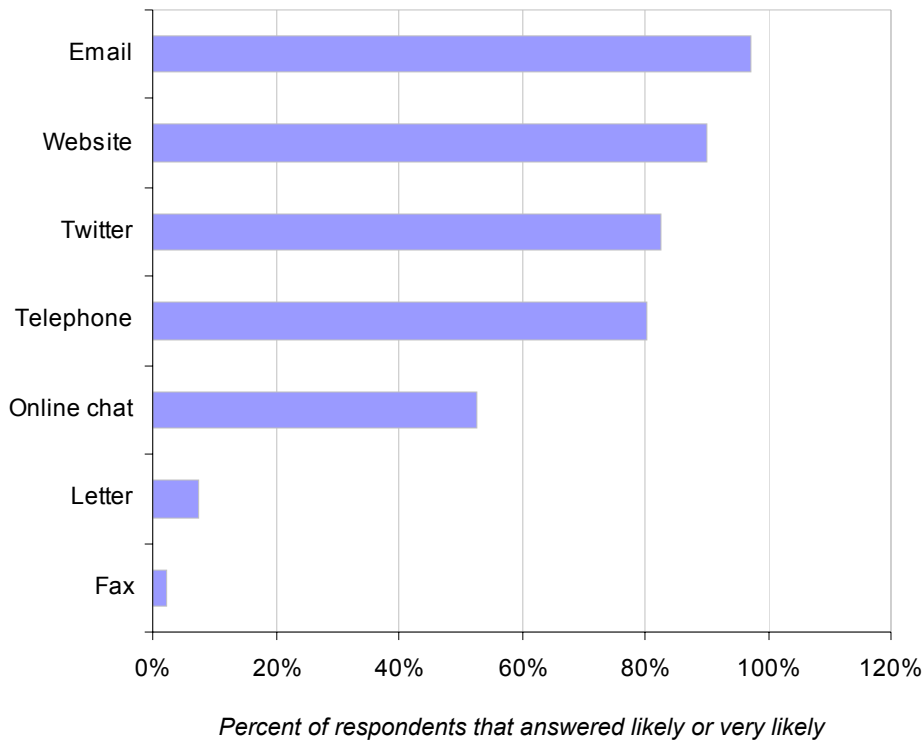


Chart 8: How likely are you to use each of the following channels to make your first request for a brand or organisations customer service/support?

TWITTER USERS ARE AS LIKELY TO TWEET ABOUT NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH A BRAND AS WITH POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

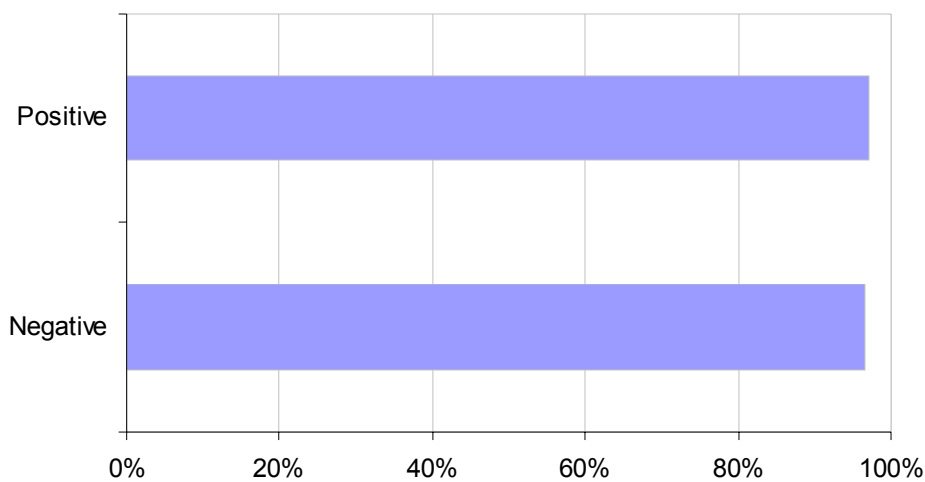


Chart 9: Nearly 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements “If I have a negative experience with a brand I am likely to tweet about it” and “If I have a positive experience with a brand I am likely to tweet about it.”

95% OF RESPONDENTS WELCOME BRAND ENGAGEMENT VIA TWITTER

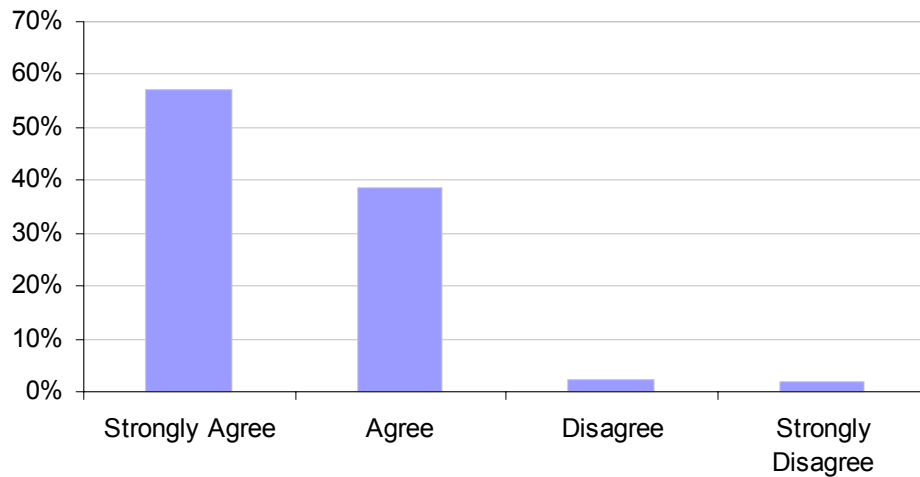


Chart 10: I feel brands should engage with their customers on Twitter.

65% OF RESPONDENTS ARE INTERESTED IN RECEIVING SPECIAL OFFERS

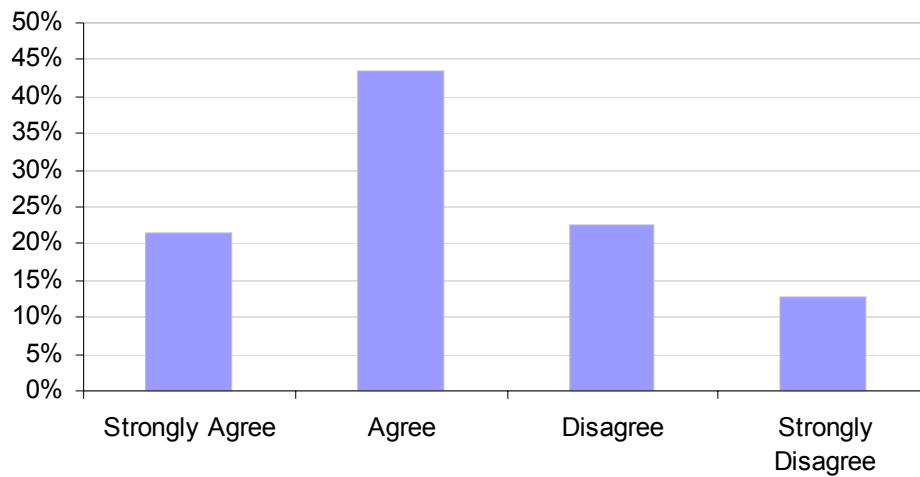


Chart 11: I am interested in receiving special offers and coupons from brands on Twitter.

88% OF RESPONDENTS WOULD RECOMMEND A BRAND BASED ON THEIR TWITTER EXPERIENCE

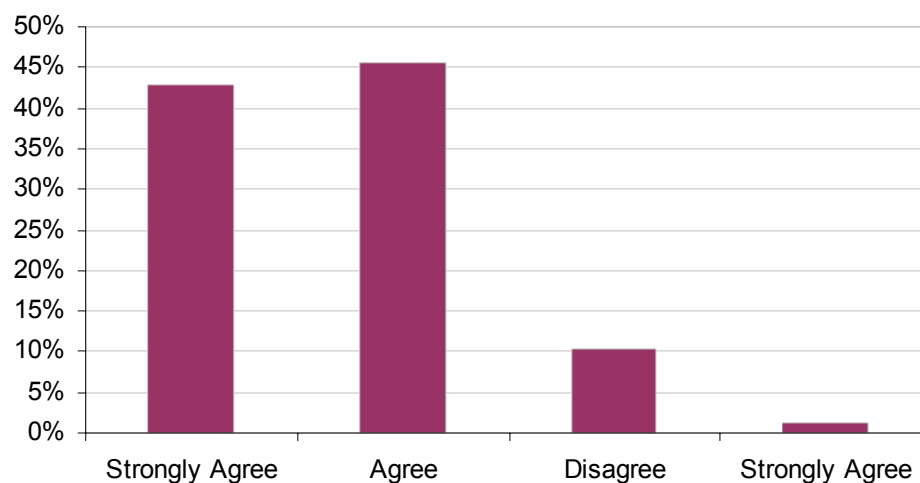


Chart 12: I would recommend a company or brand based on my experience with their presence on Twitter.

82% OF RESPONDENTS' BELIEVE PURCHASING INFLUENCED BY BRANDS THEY KNOW ON TWITTER

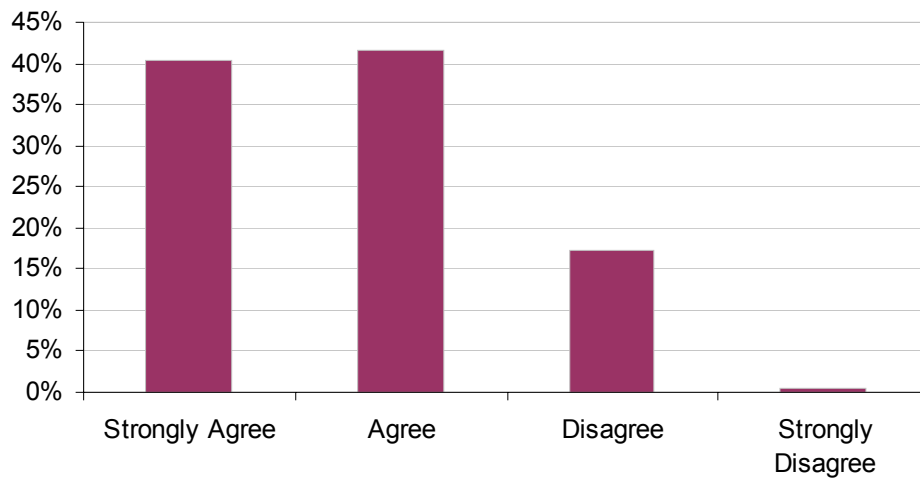


Chart 13: I would be more willing to purchase a product or service from a brand that has a relationship with me on Twitter.

101 things brands should know

We asked all respondents to the survey "What one piece of advice would you give to a brand using Twitter?" 101 Twitter users gave their best advice. This is it.

What one piece of advice would you give to a brand using Twitter?

Prepare in advance

- + Don't go [on Twitter] unless you are prepared.
- + Don't get onto Twitter unless you plan to be really engaged - it could backfire.
- + If you want to be on Twitter, make sure that you have the right people to use your account.
- + Come with special 'Twitter team' that can help customers with their questions and issues.
- + Do not go there because you have to, think about what you're up to and what people expect to experience on Twitter, I assume knowledge sharing, not an annoying brand call to action.
- + A brand twitter account can be NEGATIVE to the brand IF there's no goal or strategy. IF the response is slow; in that case, it better be just informative. IF it's not transparent. IF the brand's expectations on Twitter exceed the reality. After all Twitter is just a complementary communication tool.
- + Ensure you devote sufficient resources i.e. a good communicator that is employed by your organisation as opposed to a third party, to manage your social media.
- + Make sure [Twitter] trickles down through the organization.
- + No point in being there if the feed is answered by an agency or similar with no immediate access to customer service solutions.

- + When viewing a brand's twitter profile, I expect to have a link to the brand's blog (not website). A blog creates a more intimate relation with the brand on more regular basis.
- + Think well before starting, and once you start, put your heart into it. Treat it as seriously as writing a column on a daily newspaper.

Don't advertise

- + If they use it as another platform to advertise inane it won't be useful. The humor of Twitter users is a little bit more developed than TV audiences and any information should reflect that.
- + Twitter is not an advertising medium, it is for interactivity and sharing.
- + Don't post advertisements everyday , make it 10% personal and reply to the '@'s
- + Ban self-promotion!

Don't SPAM

- + Don't spam.
- + Stop tweeting all the ruddy time. You're p---ing us off.
- + Don't spam your followers, they'll stop following you! And: always provide them with added value tweets - if you have nothing to say, then don't tweet.
- + I hope that by using Twitter, it will provide the consumer more information and not really 'spam-like' information like we receive via SMS or email. Or it will just be a waste of time reading them.
- + Not to spam or over do it with the advertising of their brand/products.
- + Don't overdo it. Relevant and informative beats spam any time.

- + I would suggest that you don't tweet what is seen as being spam. There is nothing worse than a constant bombardment of product tweets.
- + **Don't spam!**

Be human

- + Ensure there is a human behind the Twitter account.
- + **Try not to seem mechanic and generic... usage of Twitter should be personal and enlightening not spam or junky...**
- + Make it personal and honest. Automatic DMs or tweets are just as bad as none at all.
- + **Don't push it too hard, be friendly, be personal, get involved :-))**
- + Be honest and real; and no stupid messages please.
- + **Make it personal ... I hate it when corporates sound like a machine ... i.e. be interactive ...**
- + Take a less corporate and more human approach with your Twitter presence. Don't make it sound like your tweets are part of your official company newsletter.
- + **Speak my language.**
- + Always be positive and use Twitter as if you are really facing the customer face to face.
- + **Be authentic, and take it seriously.**
- + Be human.
- + **Twitter should be used directly by brands and not through agencies.**
- + Treating twitter as a face to face conversation not an answer machine. Be real people :)

- + Be friendly, don't just give offers, interact with tweeters and respond quickly.

Tweet smart!

- + Be sophisticated. Twitter can be used for PR, but don't use it for press releases.
- + I've had brands give me the wrong advice, pretending to know what they're talking about when they don't really. That just completely undermines a company's expertise. Make sure whoever is tweeting on behalf of the brand is knowledgeable.
- + Be active and clear what you have to offer. [I] like to deal with brands who are techno-savvy and transparent in their approach.
- + Twitter is tricky. It should be used wisely. Any slip may ruin all positive [perceptions] built-up.
- + In my honest opinion their tweets should be attractive, funny, and brilliant. So, you have to follow their tweets and read them.
- + Keep your tweets short enough to retweet!

Provide value

- + Always provide value.
- + Don't sell me anything and don't talk about yourself... build a relationship with me and provide me with value, no strings attached. Twitterers, like customers are narcissistic.

Be responsive

- + Help your customers whenever they have a problem with your products.
- + Don't ignore the Twitterers who're following you :)

- + Just reply to us when we have a problem. Introduce us to new promotions, products and marketing campaigns.
- + **Quick response.**
- + "Be extremely proactive because word spreads like wildfire on Twitter. Members tend to retweet if they read a positive or negative comment. React and respond - these are key for successful brand reputation on Twitter. A good example is [@dutweets](#). They respond ASAP and don't leave their customers hanging on a rope when they face an issue. HSBC for example is a brand that is being bashed so bad on Twitter, I'm sure they are aware of this. On the other hand, [@rakbanklive](#) joined Twitter and are already communicating with their customers. The brand should be accessible and come closer to the customer and not the other way around! (Listen to that HSBC!)"
- + **You need to answer queries within an hour if you want to be part of a Twitter conversation.**

Remember it's not all about you

- + As a note, my forming a perception of a brand, whether positive and negative, is seldom from the brand's own engagement/activity/initiative on Twitter, but rather from the discussion of actual people on Twitter and their own personal experiences with those brands.
- + **Don't push us. If we like you we'll talk about it. I'll take an individual's opinion about a product, but never its maker's :)**
- + Tweeps are a force not to be underestimated.

Don't overdo it

- + [Twitter's] not to be overdone. Enough to make your presence felt should be it.

- + Compare the Twitter activity of the UAE's two telcos, Etisalat and Du, and the responses they get, for an idea of the impact regular and responsive tweeting can achieve. Or not.
- + Don't over expose yourself. Don't be pretentious. Be there to help. Don't push: it is easy to block pushers.
- + Don't push for sales; give the advantages of products; give a review of the product; give info on the support system of the product.
- + Don't follow every single person on Twitter, just try to advertise about your account on Twitter and leave the choice for your customers if they wanna follow you or not, or make kind of evaluation for the people you wanna follow if they are from those people whom likely to follow you or not.
- + Do not tweet too much. My negative experiences on Twitter are of key people from companies or organizations themselves tweeting too much. Or tweeting something that makes me wonder if they have nothing better to do. Personal tweets of key players within an organization should be especially aware that not everyone shares a similar sense of humor or fervent belief in any given idea.
- + If you are on there representing a company, don't over-egg the cake. Don't reply to every single person who mentions your company because it annoys everyone else and doesn't make you look like the sharp marketer you think you are!
- + Don't over do it.

Engage, engage, engage

- + Engage with and understand your customers on Twitter.
- + Don't just post links: engage people.

- + Proactively engage with current and potential customers and LISTEN to their concerns and feedback. Don't make it a 1-way platform to send updates about yourself.
- + Same as all sales, don't over promise and under deliver, be happy whilst engaged and engaging others, be helpful.
- + Engage the user and create a relationship.
- + Never build presence and relationships via Twitter, if you don't intend to maintain them.
- + Engage, engage and also engage with your customers.
- + Follow back all your followers if possible, some might want to give you feedback in confidence via DMs which is not possible if you are not following them.
- + Don't spam. Engage.
- + Try to build a relationship with your customers online. Not just follow them.

Listen

- + Listen to people's complaints and suggestions and then implement the solutions.
- + Listen first please before you start ranting...
- + Transparency, genuineness and respect for the customer are the more important than the media of communication. If you don't get these [things] right, no amount of old or new media flogging will fix your image.
- + Listen to your customers, and what they say about your products or services and always engage with them.
- + Monitor you brand and answer as many replies as possible and be honest.

- + Be online day and night and listen/answer to customers :)
- + Listen to consumers and engage with them.
- + Keep track of the tweets and be proactive as soon as you are aware of a problem.
- + Listen to your customers. Put your ear to the grindstone and listen to the bad (or good) things they are saying. It is a direct tap into the overall psyche of your clients and allows you to get a good or bad vibe.
- + Monitor your brand mentions on Twitter. I just tweeted on the problem I had with FlyDubai. If FlyDubai was GREAT at customer service at least they would have contacted me.
- + Companies shouldn't get on Twitter just because everyone else is doing it! And it doesn't have to mean putting out 10 tweets a day. The least they could do is look at tweets related to the brand and use feedback to shape marketing direction and solve problems as soon as they get flagged up.

Twitter is for two-way conversations

- + Twitter is a tool for dialogue. Use it as one.
- + Twitter is a two-way conversational medium, not a one-way broadcast medium. If you're going to create a brand channel on Twitter then be ready and able to handle engagement with the Twitter community. And, please, PLEASE keep any promises you make on Twitter to your customers...

Be genuine

- + Stay true and transparent.
- + Never cheat.
- + Offer genuine help / no spam.

- + Be personable and honest.
- + Be honest! Be sincere!
- + Be honest, be transparent, be there for your customers when they need you.
- + Engage people, don't be too formal - enjoy the ride :)

Other advice, tips and comments

- + Be selective
- + Keep in touch and support the technology in Iraq by using Twitter. I work training the youth in my country on how to use the new media and social media in Iraq.
- + [@dutweets](#) is phenomenal.
- + "check this out: <http://www.steitblog.com/2009/11/14/companies-are-you-on-twitter-yet-customer-care/>" and get on Twitter fast.
- + Leave twitter. It's only a matter of time before the users leave anyway. The signal to noise ratio is growing exponentially, rendering the medium useless.*
- + Don't dismiss Twitter and social media as 'just another fad'; it's more powerful and useful than you think.
- + Continuously update.
- + Have seen some brands using TXT speak - i.e. "don't 4get" - and sound like naff teenagers.
- + Pay attention!

* Note: This was the only negative comment about Twitter received in responses to this question

Methodology

Spot On Public Relations invited more than 1,000 Twitter users across the Middle East and Africa to take part in a Customer Service and Twitter survey during February 2010. 177 respondents complete the entire survey, of which 174 were based in MENA. Comparable statistics from Spot On PR's August 2009 MENA Twitter Habits Survey have also been used in this report (216 MENA Twitter users completed the entire survey). All facts, figures and statistics come from data submitted by responders to the survey questionnaire except over all MENA Twitter community statistics, growth statistics and statistics attributed to other sources. Overall statistics for registered Twitter users in MENA come from Spot On's own estimates of registered Twitter users, which are based on data monitored via third party applications.

Spot On Public Relations

[Spot On Public Relations](#) is an integrated communications firm that works with organisations to create clear and differentiated positioning, build clear propositions and help them to engage effectively with the people they want to talk to, online and offline.

Spot On Public Relations is the Middle East network partner of [Brodeur Partners](#) and a founder member of the [Middle East Public Relations Association \(MEPRA\)](#).

Our services

With a 15-year track record of managing communications for international companies, government entities and NGOs in the Middle East, Spot On offers strategic counsel, strong market experience and a strong track record of achievements.

The firm offers a broad range of services including corporate communications, event management, executive platform development, media relations, marketing communications, online communications and public affairs.

Spot On's clients include IBM, DMA, Lenovo, Oki and Virgin Megastore Middle East.

Spot On & social media

Spot On Public Relations has a long and close relationship with the Internet in the Middle East since it first became available in the Middle East region in 1994, from working with key Internet proponents in the region such as Cisco Systems, Intel, Novell and Microsoft to build and execute early Internet adoption and market awareness campaigns through to its own history of using Internet technologies in its business. Already a recognised thought leader in the social media space, Spot On has a wide base of social media connections and is an active social media user across many platforms. We have the T-Shirt.

Spot On is a strong advocate of blogging, social networking and social media marketing in the Middle East. In recognition of the wide variety of challenges and opportunities that new media opens up for clients, Spot On supports an extended digital offering through its network of over 20 specialised regional and global digital marketing companies.

Contact us

Spot On Public Relations
Tel: +971 4 3491686
Twitter: [@spotonpr](https://twitter.com/spotonpr)
Web: www.spotonpr.com
More social media: www.retaggr.com

Carrington Malin, Managing Director - Email: carringtonm@spotonpr.com

Alexander McNabb, Group Account Director - Email: alexanderm@spotonpr.com

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Acknowledgements

As usual, we are extremely grateful for the enthusiastic help and support from the MENA Twitter community, without which this survey would not have been made possible.