

Research: South Africans most active tweeters

January 26 2012, By MICHELLE FAUL , Associated Press

Young people tweeting from BlackBerrys and iPhones are driving the growth of Twitter in Africa, with South Africans by far the most vociferous, according to new research published Thursday.

Kenya-based Portland Communications and Tweetminster published findings indicating Twitter in Africa is widely used for social conversation and is fast becoming an important source of information. More than 80 percent of those polled said they mainly used it for communicating with friends, 68 percent said they use it to monitor news and 22 percent to search for jobs, the companies said.

The research analyzed more than 11.5 million geographically pinpointed [tweets](#) originating on the continent during the last three months of 2011. That was complemented by a survey of 500 of Africa's most active tweeters.

South Africans, with the continent's biggest economy, were the most prolific with over twice as many tweets at 5,030,226 than the next most active country of Kenya with 2,476,800 tweets. Surprisingly, Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria, had only 1,646,212 tweets from its more than 160 million people. It was followed by Egypt with 1,214,062 and Morocco with 745,620 tweets.

African tweeters are young, averaging 20 to 29 years, compared to 39 worldwide, the report said. And some 57 percent of analyzed tweets were sent from mobile phones, mainly BlackBerrys and iPhones.

The researchers noted how few African business and [political leaders](#) were joining Africa's burgeoning Twittersphere.

"With some notable exceptions, we found that business and political leaders were largely absent from the debates playing out on Twitter across the continent," they said. "As Twitter lifts off in Africa, governments, businesses and development agencies can really no longer afford to stay out of a new space where dialogue will increasingly be taking place."

Among noted Twitter users are President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga. Kagame got into an infamous Twitterspat last year with journalist Ian Birrell of The Guardian of London, with the two trading tweets about human rights and repression in the central African nation. The cyber-conversation first was joined by Kagame's foreign minister, and then went global.

While Kenyan soldiers and fighters of an extremist Somali Islamist group have been fighting each other, their spokesman have taken the battle onto Twitter, with taunts, accusations and insults being directly traded in a rare engagement on the Internet.

On Thursday, South Africa's new Corruption Watch campaign launched, including a Twitter account where tweeters encouraged each other to make it "the No. 1 followed Twitter account in South Africa."

The research, called "How Africa Tweets," found Twitter is helping form new links within Africa. The majority of those surveyed said at least half of the Twitter accounts they followed were based on the continent.

Beatrice Karanja, head of Portland Nairobi, said: "We saw the pivotal role of Twitter in the events in North Africa last year, but it is clear that

Africa's [Twitter](#) revolution is really just beginning."

More information: Rwanda's President Paul Kagame:

<http://twitter.com/paulkagame>

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga: <http://twitter.com/odinga-raila>

Kenyan military spokesman Emmanuel Chirchir:

<http://twitter.com/Major-chirchir>

Corruption Watch: <http://twitter.com/Corruption-SA>

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