

How TNS is harnessing the true value of social media insights

Issued by [Kantar](#)

17 Oct 2014

Social media has grown exponentially and has become an increasingly important aspect in understanding consumer engagement. In order to help its clients make decisions in an increasingly complex and connected environment, TNS has launched its social media offering to make sense of the vast data in this space.

"The statistics around social media illustrate just how fundamental it is becoming to the way in which communication and brand engagement takes place," says Chris Davies, Junior Innovation Partner at TNS. According to the research company's Connected Life study, emerging markets tend to be more active on social media than developed markets, especially when it comes to broadcasting opinions and discussion. Facebook has just reached 100 million users in Africa, with 80% accessing the platform via mobile devices. In South Africa, according to the latest Social Media Landscape report, there are 9.4 million active Facebook users and 5.5 million Twitter users (129% growth year on year), and 79% of brands have a presence on Twitter. However, although 91% of brands believe they should incorporate social media as part of their strategy, only 19% currently feel they are getting real value from being in this space.

Davies comments that TNS's new offering can assist brands with working out whether they have a meaningful place in the social media environment and what their strategy should be for maximum return. In South Africa, Connected Life data shows that there is a digital skew towards social and communication; it therefore makes sense to bear this in mind when looking for opportunities to optimise brand exposure using social media.

The true value of social media from a research perspective is the shift from asking to listening, resulting in data that represents the unprompted, unfiltered voice of the consumer. In this way, we gain a real sense of how consumers talk to each other and to brands as well as what is really important to them.

TNS's new social media offering enables the company to help its clients define a category and isolate drivers of engagement; measure the impact of a social campaign; measure social brand share; listen over time; and augment survey research. Davies furthermore comments that the offer is geographically unlimited and supports fast and rapid reporting. What is more, it also enables a historical focus, with the ability to retrospectively analyse social media content for a six month period.

What TNS brings to the table with this offering is differentiated from other social analysis in several ways. Davies explains, "Our social media analysis is not just about hard metrics, because we believe the conversations taking place need to be considered in a broader context." He clarifies that TNS's offer provides data-led social community analysis to give full category, brand and competitive context. Davies continues that the analysis is conducted at a granular level, whereby a specific category can be broken down into key communities and influencers in order to understand real consumer engagement. It is also key here that Davies and his team have developed a platform agnostic approach. This means that TNS is able to work with data they collect through their in-house social media scraping platforms or as easily use data collected by a client's existing social media supplier. And of course it is of utmost importance to the company that it works with clean and relevant data. With this in mind TNS has developed a very robust cleaning process to sift through the huge volumes of data. This approach allows TNS to make sense of the clutter and get closer to the real world, making the insights uncovered more actionable.

Working with social data is certainly new territory. It demands careful ethical consideration and requires a new mind-set when it comes to sampling. However, in an increasingly connected world, it is essential for brands to listen to what the consumer is saying, and understand how to capitalise on this, within the social media environment. TNS is leading the way in getting to grips not only with how to deal with this data, but also with what to do with the insights being borne out of it, so

that its clients can make valuable and precise business decisions in line with an ever-evolving world.

About TNS

TNS advises clients on specific growth strategies around new market entry, innovation, brand switching and stakeholder management, based on long-established expertise and market-leading solutions. With a presence in over 80 countries, TNS has more conversations with the world's consumers than anyone else and understands individual human behaviours and attitudes across every cultural, economic and political region of the world. TNS is part of Kantar, one of the world's largest insight, information and consultancy groups. Please visit www.tnsglobal.com for more information.

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