

On Twitter, content-upload and shamanism

 By [Marcela Ospina](#)

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My line of work entails keeping close track of cultural trends in the digital technology field. The trend I've picked on this occasion points to a common behaviour amongst mobile Internet users - their reluctance to produce and manage their own online content, specifically, commenting on websites, micro-blogging (Twitter), and blogging.

So how may brands use this insight to improve their social media strategies?

I have observed how people use digital and mobile technology in South Africa for three years. Data shows an incremental connectivity from mobile phones, but restricted online activity. The time users spend online is short and, given that the majority of them keep account of this as the airtime has high costs, their online engagement is limited. Due to these reasons, among others, users perform searches but upload very little content.

Level of engagement

It has become consensual that the use of mobile Internet will continue growing, with more people buying and using smartphones. Despite the imminent importance of such a development, this phenomenon poses new challenges, such as the level of engagement with applications and platforms. Users strive for being connected at all times but when looking at converting and transforming their online behaviour, the landscape becomes more challenging for brands.

In spirituality, shamans help members of a group to communicate with spiritual forces. They are a bridge between the human world and the sources of nature. When analysing online activities, and the role of technology in reinforcing content-sharing, holistic traditional views become relevant, as this piece will show.

The trend of little content upload at present will change together with increased connectivity but there are kinds of users who will not, or cannot, embrace such a movement because of their cultural background.

Online interaction too short

It seems that those who started connecting to the Internet recently do not easily find information to comment on. This may be because each online interaction is too short. With increased connectivity, and reduced rates, this trend may change.

There are some low-end users who, due to cultural beliefs, consider instant messaging and micro-blogging something exclusive to young people. Tapping into this frame of thinking will be challenging and it will greatly depend on the level of understanding of people's mind set, essential needs, and how technology can provide solutions to them.

When brands implement digital marketing campaigns, they often ask from digital consumers a level of engagement that implies they know platforms well, but also use their imagination and knowledge in order to create content. More often than not, marketing directors blame digital agencies because of the inaccuracy of the campaign results.

Brands should play a more active role

One answer to this is that, as opposed to expecting users to participate in discussions, spread information, and voice their opinions, brands should play a more active role. They need to become a bridge between platforms and content.

Resembling what a shaman does as an intermediary between two different worlds, brands can provide content that users feel connected to. This will tackle their fears of spontaneously creating and publishing information that they do not think of beforehand.

ABOUT MARCELA OSPINA

Anthropologist Marcela Ospina Salcedo (www.marcelaospina.com) specialises in helping brands understand consumers from a cultural viewpoint. By using ethnography and drawing from neuropsychological principles, she advises on developing marketing plans, launching new products, and innovating communications strategies. She has a MA in sociology from Wits and eight years' experience doing ethnography and qualitative research in South Africa, South America and other African countries. She currently works at Aquaonline as a strategist. Email me me@marcelaospina.com and follow [@marcela_ospina](https://twitter.com/marcela_ospina).

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