

THE RISE OF TWITTER IN THE LATIN AMERICAN LANDSCAPE: A STUDY OF THE MOST FOLLOWED ACCOUNTS IN BRAZIL, MEXICO, ARGENTINA, COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA

A ASCENSÃO DO TWITTER NO CENÁRIO DA AMÉRICA LATINA: UM ESTUDO DAS CONTAS MAIS SEGUIDAS NO BRASIL, MÉXICO, ARGENTINA, COLÔMBIA E VENEZUELA

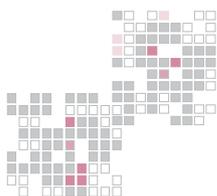
EL ASCENSO DE TWITTER EN EL PAISAJE DE AMÉRICA LATINA: ESTUDIO DE LAS CUENTAS MÁS SEGUIDAS EN BRASIL, MÉXICO, ARGENTINA, COLOMBIA Y VENEZUELA

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ABSTRACT

Several studies have concluded that two out of three Internet users in Latin America would be using at least one social network by late 2013. More concretely, there are more than 278 million Internet users across Latin America by late 2013, eclipsing the number of Internet users in both North America and Europe for the first time. This article analyses various reports from world-leading consulting brands in the context of Latin America. Currently, the fastest growing social network in this region is Twitter. We studied the fifteen most followed Twitter accounts in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela to find out who own these accounts and what their social roles are (politicians, journalists or companies).

KEYWORDS: SOCIAL MEDIA; INTERNET; BROADBAND; DIGITAL JOURNALISM; TWITTER; LATIN AMERICA.

RESUMO

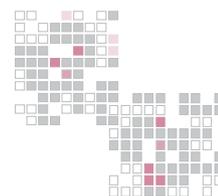
Vários estudos concluíram que dois em cada três usuários de Internet na América Latina estariam usando pelo menos uma rede social no final de 2013. Mais concretamente, são mais de 278 milhões de utilizadores da Internet em toda a América Latina até o final de 2013, superando o número de usuários de Internet na América do Norte e Europa pela primeira vez. Este artigo analisa diversos relatórios de consultoria de marcas líderes mundiais no contexto da América Latina. Atualmente, o mais rápido crescimento da rede social nesta região é o Twitter. Estudamos os quinze contas de Twitter mais seguidas no Brasil, México, Argentina, Colômbia e Venezuela para descobrir que possuem essas contas e que seus papéis sociais são (políticos, jornalistas ou empresas).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: SOCIAL MEDIA; INTERNET; BANDA LARGA; JORNALISMO DIGITAL; TWITTER; AMÉRICA LATINA.

RESUMEN

Varios estudios han llegado a la conclusión de que dos de cada tres usuarios de Internet en América Latina sería utilizar al menos una red social a finales de 2013. Más concretamente, habrá más de 278 millones de usuarios de Internet en toda América Latina a finales de 2013, superando el número de usuarios de Internet en América del Norte y Europa por primera vez. En este artículo analiza diversos informes de las marcas líderes a nivel mundial de consultoría en el contexto de América Latina. En la actualidad, el más rápido crecimiento de la red social en esta región es Twitter. Estudiamos las quince cuentas de Twitter con más seguidores en Brasil, México, Argentina, Colombia y Venezuela para saber que son dueños de estas cuentas y cuáles son sus roles sociales son (políticos, periodistas o empresas).

PALABRAS CLAVE: MEDIOS SOCIALES, INTERNET, BANDA ANCHA; PERIODISMO DIGITAL; TWITTER; AMÉRICA LATINA.



1. Introduction

New Media and Social Media have confidently changed the ways in which people communicate with each other, with the media and with their governments (Seib, 2012). Prior to New Media technologies, gadgets and networks, the channels through which a person could communicate with the press or the government were limited to a few physical avenues. Due to bureaucracy, journalists and politicians were surrounded by an infinite number of physical nodes preventing them from having actual contact with people. These included, for example, a secretary, answering machine or simply a very busy schedule.

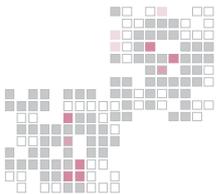
In general, individuals were so widely dispersed that trying to reach them had been a serious challenge (Hamilton, 2001). This was a problem that the Age of Electronics did not know how to solve. The radio or the television, for instance, were a one-way communication channel, so the engagement from both sides was not possible. In fact, many media theorists and sociologists believe that the Age of Electronics corrupted culture and information, thereby degrading society by alienating the individuals. These theories were proposed by Postman (1985), Baudrillard (1987), Bourdieu (1984), Revel (1991), Lipovetsky (1990) and Habermas (1989), among others. Their critiques were widely listened to in the scholarly field, but had limited impact on the media itself, as technology did not allow for proper interaction, but often served merely the purposes of entertaining its audience.

The communication channels available in the Age of Electronics were merely passive and did not engage their audience in an active manner. If someone wanted to actively engage with any media product, the media itself was not suitable for doing so. But did the people want such engagement? In fact, first attempts to involve the audience with the media were completely unsuccessful. Studies on this topic had been con-

ducted in the late 1990s and they all concluded that people simply did not want to take an active part in the media (Jenkins, 2006). Still, in the late 90s, Castells (2011) was enthusiastic about the possibility of engaging in global networking. However, neither society nor the media were at that time ready to engage with one another in an active manner. This would not change until the beginning of the 21st century, when the digital world took over people's daily lives, changing everything from communication and public opinion to business (Fondevila-Gascón, Sierra-Sánchez and Del Olmo-Arriaga, 2011) and politics (O'Connor, 2012).

While it is true that the late 1990s saw the expansion of the Internet and broadband infrastructure (Fondevila-Gascón, 2012), it was not until the year 2000 and further that the Internet began to slowly colonize households. Some owners would now be buying a computer for the first time, while others would be upgrading technology they already owned. Some consumers were entering the new era by purchasing a personal computer and an Internet connection for the first time. At this point, the new electronics did not yet represent a sense of 'network'. In fact, computers were still in general terms being used for data storage, work (document writing) and leisure (game playing). Additionally, at this time, the Internet mainly featured corporate websites with information but no actual engagement. Part of this was due to the dot-com expansion, which created a financial bubble around the possibilities of Internet, which was still at a very young stage of its development (Lowestein, 2004).

With personal computers and the Internet reaching many homes at the same time, the last concern of their owners was to generate networked participation or anything similar (Allan, 2001). Of course, not engaging with others did not exclude the possibility to engage with oneself, and so the computers became very important for



the psychological development of society (Turkle, 1980). As odd as it may sound, the telegraph and the telephone were much more engaging than the computers, in the sense that they allowed for real-time communication, while the computer did not; rather, it functioned like a giant calculator, dealing with lots of processes and then storing the results (data) of said processes. Networking was still far from happening on a massive scale, let alone activism.

The computers and the early days of the Internet certainly set the foundation for something big, something that the scholarly community envisioned much earlier than it actually happened: social and community engagement (Foth, 2011). Additionally, something that had not been particularly predicted at that time also occurred: social changes. When speaking of social changes through media, we must cite Harold Innis. Innis, the mentor of Marshall McLuhan, had developed an extensive idea of space and time control through media. Innis (2007) delves into the repercussions of using different types of media in specific periods of human history. Until Innis proposed it, the media was generally seen as a mere companion of social change and an informant technology. Innis proved, however, that media is not a reflection of social changes; rather, media is actually a tool that shapes social changes. The Canadian theorist left his legacy in three books (Innis, 2004, 2007, 2008). He had a notable influence on McLuhan (Perelló-Sobrepere, 2012). In fact, in *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1998) McLuhan picks up on Innis' main point about communication being an engine of change, a notion still relevant today for understanding how new media technologies work and to which extent they effect politics and social networking.

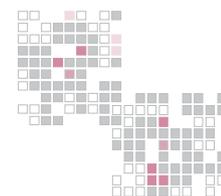
The first social engagement tools that had a significant socializing effect were blogs (Bruno, 2006; Fondevila-Gascón, 2009a). They first appeared in approximately 1994 and their expansion contin-

ues today. The idea behind these digital text spaces was very simple. If people were willing to read columnists in newspapers and listen to commentators on the radio, why not do the same on the Internet? Blogs featured people's thoughts in a very minimalist environment, which is how they remain today. However, those first blogs were not purely for the sake of networking. For instance, at their inception, there was no comments-system on blogs. They connected the user to the world, but feedback was not necessarily present.

Although real-time messaging dates back to the 1980s, it was not until the late 1990s that these tools went global. The most prominent examples are ICQ, AOL Instant Messaging and MSN Messenger. These programs featured a simple manner in which to communicate with others by sending text messages in real-time. In other words, the telegraph had gone digital. Users were beginning to experience an actual sense of networking. MSN Messenger featured only text at its inception, but kept adding other channels such as audio, video and real-time cam chat, until Microsoft decided that it would be discontinued in 2013.

Following the messaging tools that had dominated Internet-engagement during the last decade of the 20th century and first decade of the 21st century, something newer and more popular reached the screens of million users worldwide: Twitter (2006) and Facebook (2007). This was the beginning of social media. Since then, many other social networks have been created and even some of them (the not successful ones) are now closed. In the meantime, Google premiered a number of engaging services: Google Shop, Google News and Google Maps, among others. It was the beginning of the collision between old and new media (Jenkins, 2006).

Nowadays, thanks to social media, we can start speaking of an actual networked society (Liestner, 2003), at least in digital terms – networked societies existed prior to new technologies, but IT



allowed for this networking to be virtual, which is our interest in this investigation. This new digital society is permanently connected, sharing information and knowledge and changing its cognitive methods by creating new learning paths that use newly released technology (Perelló-Sobrepere, 2011). The social media revolution reached Western governments without any warning. Western countries were the first to experience social networking, essentially because of democracy and Silicon Valley. Democracy moulded a propitious context for the expansion of freedom of speech (Lichtenberg, 2002) and information technologies allowed activism to be catalysed. The key element to understanding the importance of democracy within the expansion of social networks is that Western countries had both the technologies and democracies by the time the social media had arrived. In many Arabian and Asiatic countries, however, social media arrived carrying the technologies with them, long after they had arrived in Western countries, which had allowed their governments to prevent politically incorrect behaviour through social media. Not all of them succeed in this purpose. For instance, the Arab Spring remains a successful example of social media engagement (Schiffrin and Kircher-Allen, 2012), of course with its own complexity. Some other countries are hopelessly trying to maintain censorship: in China, Twitter is blocked, yet the country has the most active users and is actually the most socially engaged country in the world. This cannot be a coincidence.

2. Social Media in Latin America

We have witnessed how New Media and social media helped to form a suitable environment for social networks to appear and revolutionize the ways in which we communicate. If China is the most socially engaged country in terms of active users, the region of Latin America, including all

its countries, is the global area with most socially engaged users. In 2012, Argentina had the highest rate of social network usage among the population as a whole, marking an impressive 38% and it is expected to stay in the lead during the upcoming years, followed by Brazil and Mexico (comScore, 2011a).

Social network user penetration in Latin America, by country, in 2012 was as follows:

- Latin America: 29.4% (to reach 36.7% by 2014)
- Argentina: 37.7% (45.4%)
- Brazil: 31.1% (37.7%)
- Mexico: 26.3% (34.1%)
- Other: 27.9% (35.6%)

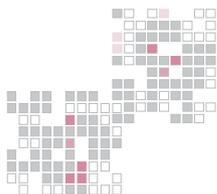
As of 2011, the Latin American population spends more time on social networks than users in any other world region. A look at the gender of the Latin American population using social networks reveals that both females and males average the longest time spent on social networking sites, with females averaging 8.2 hours and males 6.9 hours.

Internet user penetration in Latin America is as follows:

- 2013: 46.0%
- 2014: 49.0%
- 2015: 51.5%
- 2016: 53.4%

When measured, the user engagement of the average Internet user in Latin America reached a total of 24 hours online during the month of January 2011, with the average user accessing the Internet nearly 50 times during the month. Argentines and Mexicans are both the most engaged countries, with the average Argentina user spending 25.5 hours online per month and the average user in Mexico 25.3 hours per month.

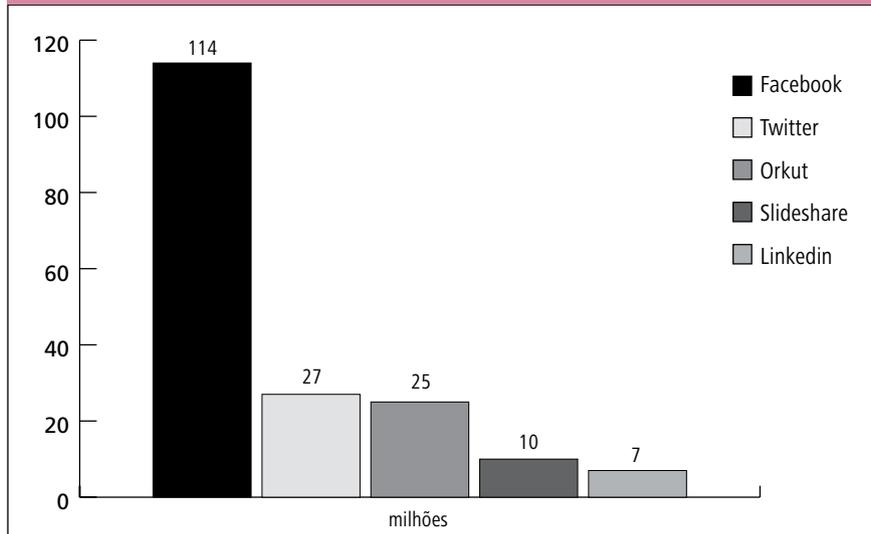
The fastest growing Latin American country in



terms of Internet access is Colombia. In parallel, the country with the bigger number of users is Brazil, with almost 40 million. Another important fact to keep in mind is that the Latin American internet audience consists mainly of young people. Global market research revealed that Venezuela has the highest percentage of its total online population between the ages of 15 to 24, which is close to half the population (44.5%). Colombia is second, with 40.2% of its Internet users being younger than 25. In comparison, the markets with the highest proportion of an audience aged 55 and older were mainly found in Western Europe, where markets often have an elderly overall population (comScore, 2011b).

By 2015, half of the Latin American population will have access to Internet and half of them will interact with social networks. Now that the Ibero-American regions have adopted broadband (Fondevila-Gascón, 2009b), the possibilities for many companies worldwide are limitless. The figures indicated above are essential to making business decisions. Global investors can be sure that an Internet-related investment will be profitable in the near future. They can be sure, too, that Internet-related research on topics such as broadband use, consumer behaviour and social networks will determine the paths through which businesses will soon be understood. More than 127 million Latin Americans aged 15 and older have visited a social networking platform since April 2012. The study counted the vis-

Figure 1. Total unique visitors of different social networks in April 2012 in the Latin American market

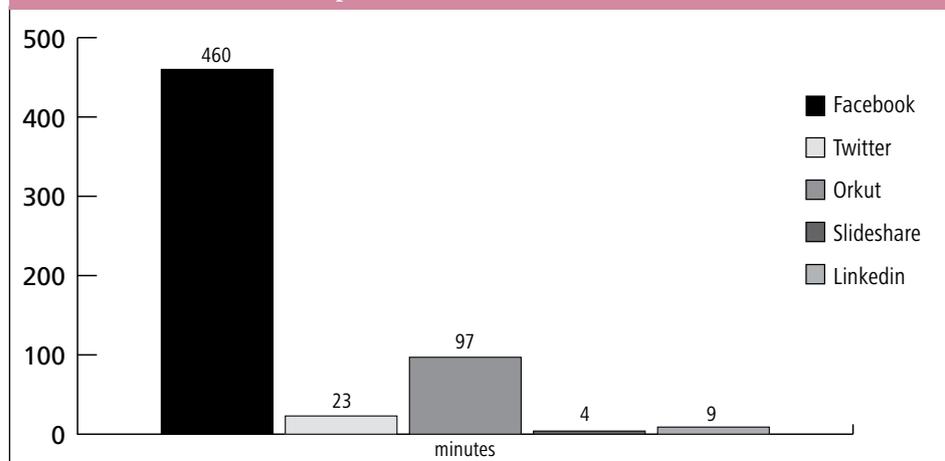


Source: comScore 2012a

its from home and work computers, but not those from cybercafés and such, which would definitely increase these numbers. The following graphics (Figure 1 and Figure 2) represent the total unique visitors of different social networks, as well as the time spent on their sites.

According to Alejandro Fosk, comScore senior vice president of Latin America, not only does nearly 100% of the Latin American Internet population visit social networking destinations each month, but they also spend a lot of time on the sites. In actual numbers, this means

Figure 2: Average minutes per visitors of different social networks in April 2012 in the Latin American market



Source: comScore 2012a

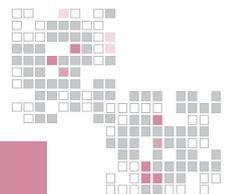
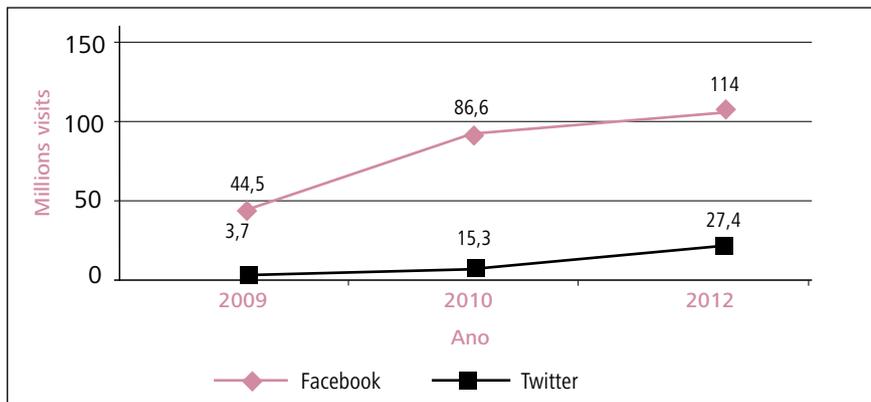


Figure 3: Total visits per month in April 2012 in the Latin American market



Source: comScore 2012a

that the average visitor spends 7.5 hours on social networking sites during the month. This figure may seem slightly low for social networking standards in Europe or the US, but we have to take into consideration that in this study, a user had to be actively engaged with the browser in order to be credited with duration. Additionally, there are many lighter users of social networking who can bring down the overall average. Furthermore, the use of mobile devices to visit social networks was not counted in this instance –which is a major limitation. The comScore study reflects usage via computer browsers; this is the data that markets apply in order to take product decisions. An even more illustrative number is that, in Latin America, one in every four minutes spent online is spent on Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg’s network leads the Latin American market in terms of social networking destinations. Following Facebook, Twitter comes in at second place and Orkut closes the podium as the third most visited social network. It must be noted, however, that Orkut’s visits come mainly from Brazil, where the Google-acquired network is very popular. Behind these networks, Slideshare, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Badoo, MySpace, Deviantart and VK follow, in this order. In spite of being second to Facebook, the time spent on Twitter still remains far from that spent on Facebook. Zuckerberg’s

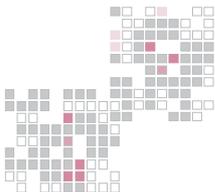
site accounted for 114 million visitors in April 2012, when the study was conducted, while Twitter counted 27 million (Figure 3).

In spite of Facebook’s dominating position, Twitter is the social network with the bigger gain in terms of visitors. In only one year, from 2009 to 2010, Twitter visits in Latin America went up 305%, from 3.7 to 15.3 million, while Facebook visits went up by 109%. Using the most recent data available from April 2012 and still using 2009

as a reference, Twitter has multiplied its visits by seven, going up from 3.7 to 27.4 million, an impressive increase of 604% in less than 36 months. Using the same references, Facebook has gone from 44.5 to 114 million visits, an increase of 156%. In conclusion, we can therefore see that Twitter is the fastest growing platform in Latin America.

3. Case study: Twitter’s top 15 followed accounts in Latin America’s top five countries with the most Internet users

Social networks have been granted the same importance as any other traditional media when measuring the impact of some topic or event. It is not uncommon to find news articles, mainly on digital journalism, dedicated to what Twitter users think about several current issues. For example, they measure the thoughts before, during and after a sports match, a presidential campaign, a crucial meeting or a live activity. Because the news industry has dedicated so many lines to Twitter, we wanted to learn if Twitter users were also following news industry accounts. Having had many authors claim that Twitter and other social networks will revalorize the sense of information, we expected that the most followed accounts on Twitter to be those of newspapers, TV stations, journalists and anyone or anything



related to the news industry in general. Hence, the sole purpose of this study was to determine whether the most followed accounts in each of the studied countries were related to news media or not.

3.1 Methodology

As we have previously stated, our objective was to analyse the fifteen most followed Twitter accounts in the Latin American regions with the most internet users. To find the right information, we used the online source of Internet World Stats, a worldwide ranking with information on more than 230 countries and their Internet usage.

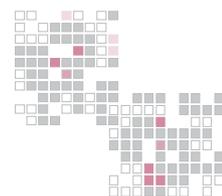
According to statistics updated on December 31st, 2011, Latin America accounts for 10% of the total worldwide Internet users. There were an estimated 230,928,258 Internet users in Latin America (representing about 39.9% of the region's population). Among the Latin American countries, the five with the most users are:

1. Brazil: 79,245,740 (39% of the population in the country)
2. Mexico: 42,000,000 (36%)
3. Argentina: 28,000,000 (67%)
4. Colombia: 25,000,000 (55.9%)
5. Venezuela: 10,976,342 (39.7%)

Once we had identified the countries and analysed their internet usage data, we went on researching for the top 15 Twitter accounts in each of the proposed countries: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela. The data shown in the "Results and discussion" part was gathered on 27 November, 2012 and was retrieved through *twitaholic.com*, a free-access online tool born that counts Twitter usage by locations. It must be noted that *twitaholic.com* belongs to the Amsterdam-based company Twitter Counter, one of the few third party companies that Twitter has licensed to use its name. Both Twitter Counter and

twitaholic.com offer the most reliable and accurate information on Twitter accounts, even so if we consider that Twitter itself keeps the big and detailed information only to themselves.

The location of each account is something that users specify on their profile. If the actual name of the country from where the account is managed is not specified on the user's profile, *twitaholic.com* will not count it. If the user has made an error in the name of the country, it will also not be taken into consideration. The data on *twitaholic.com* is as close as we can get to user locations regarding Twitter accounts, as Twitter does not disclose this type of data in official figures. Nevertheless, assuming that most people will not switch locations or write them wrong, we believe that *twitaholic.com* is still a reliable source. In this regard, it should be noted that reports on the Internet and social networks are released unsystematically, with different values and sample periods and, of course, with different results. These reports are partially undisclosed and the full documents may cost around \$5.000 per paper, if not more. In a time of economic crisis, there are few academic institutions that can afford this high cost of information. Moreover, these types of studies are often market-oriented, meaning that while they may be useful for strategic businesses, they are likely to fall short in terms of scholarly expectations. Taking into account that by the time an article is published the data will have changed already, it does not seem feasible to argue for these prices. Furthermore, Twitter will not release reports of its own. As a whole, these circumstances complicate the processes of data gathering, merging and final evaluation. Whether a study is conducted in general terms or approaches a case study set in a specific period (as most scientific articles do), its conclusions may only apply within the very same study as it will be difficult to extrapolate it for further investigations. If we agree that Twitter and its counterparts have changed the way



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we communicate, it becomes mandatory to also change the way in which we measure information. Considering the enormous repercussion of the Internet and in particular that of the social networks, we believe in the need for creating a public and global institute capable of measuring live-time activity in social networks, along with their immediate repercussions.

Once the research was completed, we created ranking tables to compare the gathered data. These tables consisted of the rank number, Twitter name and actual name (if available), the number of followers, the number of followings and the total number of status updates. These tables have not been included in this article due to space limitations. Instead, we proceeded to mention and analyse the data directly in the discussion part of the article. In commenting on the results, the reader will find all the necessary information regarding the data gathered. We divided the accounts that we investigated into generic categories. Using these categories, we separated what was strictly related to news media from what was not. Media related accounts that were not strictly aligned with the news industry field were marked as Entertainment. The rest of the categories were Politics, Sports, Business and Life Topics.

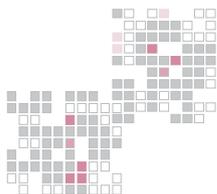
3.2 Results and discussion

In Brazil, the fifteen most followed accounts on Twitter accounted for 49.164.718 followers. The top three was held by the TV show Pánico with 7.175.238 followers. In second place, the TV personality Sabrina Sato followed with 5.340.901 followers. The third was one of Brazil's most famous comedians, Rafinha Bastos. Together, these three accounts accounted for 35.72% (17.560.141) of

the total followers of Mexico's top 15 Twitter accounts. Their updates represent 12.4% (68.886) of the 555.566 total updates amongst the fifteen accounts. The rest of the rank has three musicians, two TV shows, one TV station, one TV producer, one digital newspaper, two journalists and one business. Using our generic categorization, the results were: Entertainment: 10 and News Media: 5.

In Mexico, the fifteen most followed accounts on Twitter accounted for 25.163.895 followers. The top three was led by the singer Anahi with 5.507.238 followers. In second place was actor Roberto Bolaños with 4.384.108 followers. Closing the top three was another singer, Julieta Venegas. Together, these three accounts accounted for 50.06% (12.597.864) of the total followers of Mexico's top 15 Twitter accounts. Their updates represented 7.82% (12.531) of the 160.232 total updates among the fifteen accounts. The rank was completed by one comedian, one journalist, five musicians, four actors and an account dedicated to famous quotes. Under the generic categorizations, the results were tabulated as Entertainment: 14 and News Media: 1. It is certainly noticeable that Mexico's top 15 Twitter accounts were dominated by individuals that belonged to the show business industry and they were either musicians or actors.

In Argentina, the fifteen most followed accounts on Twitter added up to 11.562.220 followers. The podium was led by the singer Diego Torres with 2.122.446 followers. Following in second place was the journalist Jorge Rial, known for being the TV host of Argentina's Big Brother, with 1.852.362 followers. In third place was Argentina's president, Cristina Kirchner. She was



also the only politician on Argentina's top 15 accounts. Together, the top three accounts accounted for 46.52% (5,378,689) of the total followers of the fifteen most followed accounts. Nevertheless, their tweets made up only 9.33% (34,995) of the 375,077 total updates. The top 15 rank was completed by four actors, three media outlets, a journalist, a sportsman, two musicians and a TV personality. When put in more generic categories, these results were tabulated as Entertainment: 9, News Media: 4, Politics: 1 and Sports: 1. Specifically, the athlete (representing the 'Sport' category) was the famous soccer player Lionel Messi, currently in FC Barcelona. It must be noted that a few weeks after we gathered this data, Lionel Messi's account was suspended and that he currently has no official account. What he does have, however, are many impersonators using his name for creating fake accounts. In fact, it is a common practice amongst Twitter users for strangers to create fake accounts claiming to be someone famous, with the sole purpose of either confusing people or gathering an enormous quantity of followers by pretending to be someone else. Twitter is aware of this malpractice and they have ideated an easy system for users to identify whether an account is official or not by adding a blue tick next to the user's name. Actors, singers, athletes and politicians are among the groups that use Twitter's verification system, so that their followers can be sure they are following the actual person and not an impersonator.

In Colombia, the fifteen most followed accounts on Twitter accounted for 13,563,177 followers. The top three was led by the news media RCN, the biggest media corporation in Colombia, with 1,967,584 followers. Behind it, its main rival, Caracol Noticias, followed with 1,615,900 followers. In third place was Colombia's former president, Álvaro Uribe. Together, these three accounts accounted for 37.38% (5,069,685) of the total followers of Colombia's top 15 Twit-

ter accounts. Their updates represented 22.9% (117,152) of the 511,528 total updates among the fifteen accounts. The rank was completed by one politician, two musicians, three radio channels, one magazine, two TV hosts and a few accounts that tweeted jokes and love messages. It is interesting to see that directly behind Uribe, now the former president of Colombia, was Juan Manuel Santos, the 2010 elected president of Colombia, with 1,266,432 followers, barely 220,000 less followers than Uribe. The difference was bigger in status updates, however. While Uribe had 11,916 tweets, Santos had only 3,666. Divided by categories, the results were News Media: 6, Entertainment: 5, Politics: 2 and Life Topics: 2. While Argentina had only four accounts related to news media on its rank, it must be noted that two of them were journalists and two other media channels, compared to Colombia's top 15 accounts where there were six media related accounts, but no journalists. Instead, these six accounts were media channels: two TV stations, three radio stations and a magazine.

In Venezuela, the fifteen most followed accounts on Twitter accounted for 18,168,070 followers. The Venezuelan president in 2012, Hugo Chávez, held the first position with 3,738,137 followers. In second place was the media corporation Globovisión with 1,869,938 followers. The third account belonged to Henrique Capriles, who had been Chávez' rival in the latest presidential elections. Together, these three accounts account for 40.52% (7,362,117) of the total followers of Colombia's top 15 Twitter accounts. Their updates represented 23.28% (288,841) of the 1,240,528 total updates of the fifteen accounts. The rest of the rank had a wide variety of account types. One belonged to a newspaper, one to a digital newspaper, one to a politician, one to a TV host, two to two different businesses and four accounts fell under the Life Topics category: one tweets sarcasm, another tweets famous

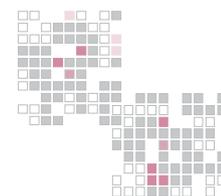


Table 1: Classification of generic categories on Twitter's most followed accounts

Country/Theme	Entertainment	News media	Life topics	Politics	Other: business, sportsmen
Brazil	10	5	0	0	0
Mexico	14	1	0	0	0
Argentina	9	4	0	1	1
Colombia	5	6	2	2	0
Venezuela	1	5	4	3	2
Total	39	21	6	6	3
Average	7.8	4.2	1.2	1.2	0.6

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

quotes and the other two tweet updates with facts from different disciplines. When divided into generic categories, the results tabulated were News Media: 5, Life Topics: 4, Politics: 3, Business: 2 and Entertainment: 1. One of the most interesting things about the Venezuelan rank is that in spite of having more than twice the amount of Capriles' followers, the incumbent president Chávez has tweeted only 1.812 times, while his opponent has sent out 7.010 tweets. Entertainment was the leader in all the countries (Table 1), followed by news media, life topics, politics and other (business and sportsmen).

4. Conclusions

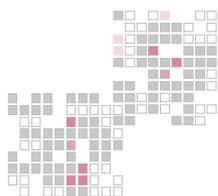
As of the third quarter of 2012, Twitter accounts related to the entertainment world are dominating Brazil, Mexico and Argentina's rankings. Actors, singers and TV-stars have more followers than their political counterparts. On the other hand, the top accounts in Colombia and Venezuela were those managed by media emporiums or journalists themselves, closely followed by the accounts of politicians. Therefore, it would seem that Twitter users in Colombia and Venezuela are more concerned with news media and politics than their counterparts in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. This can be explained from a sociological point of view, in the sense

that Colombia and Venezuela have recently undergone government changes and scandals and as a result, more people have become interested in these issues and have looked for information about them using online resources. The rankings and the genres of the accounts will keep changing every month, but one thing remains clear: Social networks are taking Latin America by storm, and this shall benefit them in many regards, such as politics and economy.

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