

Twitter Study of 200 Francophone Physicians reveals frequent use of pseudonym

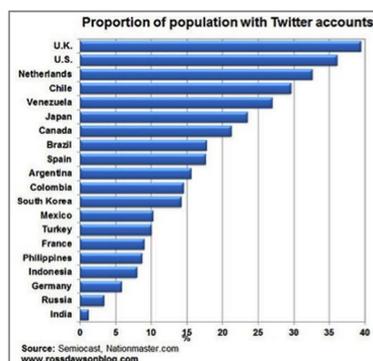


Denise Silber @Health20Paris (Basil Strategies),
Mathilde Holard (Basil Strategies),
Henri Gracies, M.D. @MediaMed



Introduction

Twitter, the micro-blogging site, where texts must include fewer than 140 characters, has attained international status as a top-ten social media tool for conversation. However, the percentage of users differs widely even amongst the top 20 countries. Approximately



10% of French population had a Twitter account as of February 2012. Current events increase the number.

Little is known about the behavior of French physicians on Twitter.

We studied a population of 200 physicians included on a Twitter list <https://twitter.com/#!/MediTwitt/statuses/170200358050738176> maintained by Dr. Henri Gracies, French ophthalmologist, @MediaMed on Twitter, and fellow member of the French Medical Webmasters' Association <http://www.mmt-fr.org>

Background

A general observation is that French physicians are not active on the main Social Media platforms. Our hypothesis was that many French and French-speaking physicians would maintain anonymous accounts. Several factors would appear to contribute to physician reserve regarding Social Media in France: long working hours, fear of medical responsibility for a public

conversation, preference for internet dialogue only with professionals, fear of appearing to advertise their services (which is not authorized in France), fear of revealing identifiable information about their patients if they wish to discuss a case with a colleague. Of note as well, average age of physicians in France is at 47, high for Social media. These concerns, with the exception of advertising which is allowed in certain countries, are not specific to France.

Method

Our goal in examining the @MediaMed twitter lists, was to see what we could learn about the French-speaking physician population. Dr Henri Gracies, ophthalmologist and active on the Internet since "the early days", curated these lists, ensuring to the best of his knowledge that the twitter accounts were those of physicians.



We collected the following data points:

Presence real name, Male/Female, Country, Paris/Other, Specialty, Number of days on Twitter, Number of Tweets, Number of Followers, Categories of last 10 tweets: patient cases, physician practice news, medical news, other, Has blog, Identified on Facebook.

Data collection was done in March/April, 2012.

Sub-analyses were made as follows: physicians identified as being in France, physicians identified as being male or female, physicians identified as being outside France, anonymous.

It was relevant to present the total, those in France, French men, French women.

Results

Findings regarding Physicians Using Twitter in France.

Identity:

- Half only of French physicians use their real name on Twitter. Half of those can also be found on Facebook.

Male versus Female physicians:

- 2/3 of male physicians and 1/3 of French female physicians use their real name on Twitter.
- As a result, only 29% of French male physicians and 19% of French female physicians on Twitter can be identified as appearing on Facebook
- Male French physicians have been on Twitter longer than female physicians: 710 versus 511 days.
- Men thus have 475 followers versus 282 for women physicians.
- However, French women physicians emit more Tweets / day: 3,3 versus 2,8 for male physicians.
- The number of followers gained per tweet, 0,2 is the same for all French physicians.

Subject of Tweets:

- Only half of French physician tweets concern subjects related to medicine.
- Within that half, only 10% relate to their case.

Location:

- 39% of physicians in France are in the Paris + suburbs area.

CRITERIA	Total N=200	Identified in France N=109	France Male N=67	France Women N=32
Real Name	40%	50%	64%	34%
Male	50%	61%	100%	NA
Female	28%	29%	N/A	100%
Gender N/A	22%	10%	N/A	N/A
Works in Paris/IDF	21%	39%	45%	25%
Specialty	31%	39%	43%	28%
Primary	35%	36%	31%	40%
Prof N/A	30%	27%	25%	33%
Days on Tw	485	659	710	511
Followers	194	389	475	282
Nb of Tweets	341	1722	1962	1681
Tweets/day	0,8	2,6	2,8	3,3
Nb of Followers/Tw	0,6	0,2	0,2	0,2
Nb in Last 10 Tweets: Cases	0,5	0,3	0,4	0,3
Nb in Last 10 Tweets: Practice of Medicine	1,8	1,9	1,6	2,8
Nb in last 10 Tweets: Medical News	2,8	2,6	2,9	1,8
Nb in last 10 Tweets: Other	4,9	4,8	4,7	5,1
On Facebook	20%	24%	29%	19%

Conclusions

While few French physicians use Twitter, those in this list have been on for nearly 2 years and average 389 follower and 1722 tweets.

Their tweets are only partially related to their medical practice.

Whether they are specialists or general practitioners, 1/3 of male physicians and 2/3 of female physicians use pseudonyms.

The difficulty in identifying French physicians on Twitter, their use of pseudonyms, and their results demonstrate that Twitter should not be a tool of choice for communicating with French physicians in general.

However, connecting with those physicians who are on Twitter can be a very efficient way to converse and learn their opinion, since they are interested in a variety of topics.

First Author contact information:



denise.silber@basilstrategies.com
Pres. of Basil Strategies, founder Doctors 2.0™ & You