Sentiment analysis provides understanding of info on social media

The last year has seen a rise in the uptake and infiltration of social networks, blogs, microblogs and forums amongst businesses. In fact, a global survey conducted by Regus revealed that 52% of businesses globally and in particular 55% of businesses in South Africa are using web sites such as Twitter to engage, connect with and inform existing customers.

"Online conversations are happening in every part of the world and our ability to capture them is critical to harness the potential of consumer awareness and brand power for a business. It's critical then that relevant considerations are made for businesses that will be directly or indirectly affected by these online conversations and one way of doing this, is to turn to sentiment analysis," says Dr. Corine van Erkom Schurink, analytics team lead at PBT.

Sentiment analysis is the method of automatically locating and analysing digital content in real time from across multiple channels such as websites, emails, forms and surveys in an attempt to hone in on customer sentiment buried within textual data.

Measure the impact of a marketing campaign

Says Jessie Rudd, data analyst at PBT: "Many organisations do not know what to do with the information that can be obtained through social media. Through sentiment analysis, businesses can gain a clear understanding of the customer and where their prospects lie, which will enable organisations both big and small to compete more effectively and efficiently in their space."

"This not only allows businesses the ability to reach further than any marketing channel, but manage their brand reputation, as well as reduce churn. In fact, the accuracy of a well designed sentiment model is widely to be estimated to be between 70% and 80%, which enables businesses to measure the impact of a marketing campaign in close to real time, or being able to address customer satisfaction the moment it is verbalised - key to any business success," continues Rudd.

"We expect a strong and continued growth on various social media platforms in 2012, and as such, a huge drive from organisations to begin analysing social and customer profiles for more tangible insights, allowing for smarter decision-making. Sentiment analysis is a branch of analytics that is still at the beginning of its journey. Best practice, appropriate tools and true understanding are all still a work in progress and as such, require the backing of a company with the knowledge, infrastructure and curiosity of a well deployed and experienced advanced analytics background to fully take advantage of the benefits such a movement holds,"concludes van Erkom Schurink.