

Twitter: No place for SA Beliebers

 By [Evert Lombaert](#)

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Troll Disclaimer: This is not going to be a Bieber-bashing piece... Anyone who has a remote understanding of social media should have some degree of respect for Justin Bieber. To state that he is a product of his time is an understatement - originally finding an audience on YouTube, he was then picked up and promoted into the mainstream, where his Facebook and Twitter presence grew to gargantuan proportions.

That said, his presence in South Africa has revealed something conspicuous by its absence - SA Beliebers largely seem to ignore Twitter as a platform.

Twitteria largely silent

During the run-up to the concerts, Twitter-savvy Beliebers were hungrily clamouring for tickets through hard marketing campaigns and competitions notably run by 5FM and Vodacom. The fans themselves, however, have been largely absent from creating their own hype. My case in point - the hours leading up to the concert (and even during the concert) had online and TV news channels showing video clips of screaming teens and tweens; Twitteria was largely silent on all things Bieber-related.

Even after the concert, at 7am this morning, six of the top 10 trends on Twitter were all related to Sir Alex Ferguson's resignation and not one of the remaining four was dedicated to the Canadian teen pop sensation.

In fact, the closest Bieber got to trending was by association as he popped up very frequently in Cape Town-related tweets (the fact that the Mother City pretty much trends on a near-daily basis however should not be overlooked in this case, sorry Justin).

Taking to Facebook to talk

Some might argue that limited cell phone reception at the concert venue itself might have led to less excitement. This might sound logical, yet doesn't take into account all the fans who didn't manage to buy tickets within the hour that it sold out. These alone should've made a serious dent on the trending scheme of things. Alas, this army of disappointed SA Beliebers took to Facebook to talk, share and live the concert.

Facebook was predictably aflutter with Bieberations before, during and after the concert and there-in lies the nugget. A Pew Internet survey conducted on the [values, attitudes and internet use of American 'Millennials'](#) (the next generation) published in 2010, revealed even back then of what is clearly in effect in South Africa now - teens largely seem to avoid Twitter. In fact, the study showed that only 8% of internet users ages 12-17 use the platform. (Marketers beware before launching any youth Twitter-only campaign in the Rainbow Nation).

This usage of the 140-character medium is in stark contrast to a report I read (but can't find now, so take it with a pinch of salt) showing that Twitter rather than Facebook is the teen social platform of choice in certain Scandinavian countries. If anything, this demonstrates how certain platforms might not be viable at a specific time or place.

Come to think of it; Bieber's presence in South Africa might be exactly what the local Beliebers needed to get active on the platform (no doubt to the dismay of many local Tweepers).

At the end of it all, the use of Twitter among SA teens and tweens should not be written off completely. As Justin himself sings: "Never say Never".

**Random watercooler discussion points:*

- *Can you imagine Presley, Jackson or Beatlemania fuelled by social platforms back in their days? Ponder.*
- *How many retweets or replies would John Lennon have received if he'd tweeted (instead of stated) his infamous "More Popular than Jesus" comment in 1966? Ponder ponder.*

ABOUT EVERT LOMBAERT

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