

TWITTER

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY



firefish

Twitter: a voyage of discovery

If you look at the world in different ways, you see different things

It is widely believed that people use different social networks in similar frames of mind.

According to both popular imagination and mainstream media, we react to what we see or read in similar ways regardless of the platform, and our motivations to like, share, or follow are the same.

However, as our recent work with Twitter showed, if you look at things more deeply and from different perspectives, a more interesting – and useful – picture emerges.

At Firefish, we address every challenge by asking first how the research will be used. We call this approach **Design for Impact**. Twitter had a hypothesis that its users approach the platform with a distinctive mindset of inquiry and discovery, and they wanted a partner to develop this theory.

If we could find evidence to support their observations, they could help commercial partners demonstrate the value of their audience to advertisers and media agencies.

Our expertise in human behaviour and our understanding of the human experience shapes our method. In this case, our approach mirrored our understanding of how communication works: people experience content, their brains are stimulated, and memory structures are changed. So, we used a combination of techniques to access and illustrate the stages of this process, producing a compelling story of how users engage with content on Twitter.

Our bespoke and hybrid approaches have helped hundreds of leading brands to make sense of human motivation and behaviour, and to bring this understanding to the heart of the decision-making process.

In this project, our approach gave Twitter clarity, impact, and commercial bite in the complex world of social media.



Research questions

Twitter asked us to explore the discovery mindset they had observed in users' interactions on the platform; to characterise Twitter users' typical mindset, and how open they are to new experiences when they're online.

The company was keen to assess whether there is a relationship between how people use the platform, how deeply they pay attention to content carried on Twitter, and what they go on to remember and do.

They also wanted to understand if people interact with Twitter differently from how they use other social platforms.

How we did it

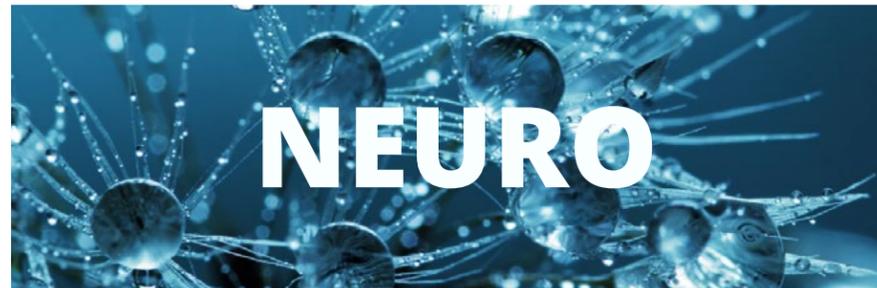
Our approach combined conversational and observational investigation, neuroscience, and implicit and explicit testing.



We held depth interviews with experts to articulate and unpack the concept of discovery. Our experts included a cognitive psychologist, a digital anthropologist, a life coach and an advertising strategist.

We gave Twitter users wearable cameras for three days to observe their discoveries in the context of their everyday lives.

We did this because use of social media and discovery are often unconscious, automatic activities. We then conducted face-to-face interviews to understand the role of Twitter from their point of view.



Next we pressure-tested these observations using our **NeuroLab** technique to monitor Twitter users' brain activity when using the platform, in partnership with Neuro Insight.



With demographics and social media usage collected, we used **Implicit Response Testing** (IRT) to identify baseline associations with a brand, then exposed social media users to a piece of the campaign on their favoured platform.

24 hours later, we reconnected with them and measured their associations again.

IRT is a proven psychological tool, used to measure how strongly people remember something and believe in it.

What we found out

Twitter users are indeed on a constant journey of discovery. They are insatiable explorers.

They want to know 'what's happening' both in the world and in their world. 83% say they are very open minded compared with 78% of other social media users.

We found that their desire for discovery is driven by a combination of both shorter-term needs (in-the-moment satisfaction and benefits like offers, travel news, and conversation topics) and longer-term needs (feeling part of something and cultivating a positive identity).



We identified three, distinctive discovery mindsets among Twitter users:

Mission-Based Discovery

when users need to find something out

Inspiration-Based Discovery

when they're curious to find out more about something they are passionate about

Serendipitous Discovery

when they fall upon content with an open curiosity



Compared with other social media networks, IRT testing showed that those exposed to ad content on Twitter had stronger associations 24 hours later.

Viewing an ad on Twitter was found to be **three times as effective** at improving brand associations, on average. Users of the platforms told us that Facebook is about social dynamics, Instagram is visual immersion, but Twitter enables truly global discovery.

Indeed, the very language of Twitter – “trends”, “follow”, “retweet”, “reply” – reinforces and encourages these discovery mindsets.



Twitter is better at driving recall and associations, thanks to the discovery mindsets users bring to the platform.

The evidence suggests that branded video content on Twitter may work just like TV advertising: it engages through personal relevance and cuts through to stimulate strong and enduring memories.

Summing up

This recent project with Twitter shows that it is only by combining different research tools and techniques that researchers can get a truly rounded understanding of how people think and behave.

By looking at the question in different ways, we can understand the relevant facets of the human condition that matter to businesses.

Taking an unconventional approach is how we generate breakthrough insights with impact.



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