

**COSIE**

Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe



Harri Jalonen & Jussi Kokkola

# Enabling Co-creation through Twitter

- A Guidebook for Research Project Communication

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# Foreword



# Foreword

**T**his guidebook instructs how social media, particularly Twitter, can effectively be used for communicating projects' aims and achievements and for interacting with stakeholders. Although the guidebook focuses on Twitter, we believe that the findings can also be applied to other social media sites.

After a short overview on the use of social media, the guidebook introduces a co-creative communication framework that includes three dimensions—science communication, expert communication, and project communication. We provide insights into how to create user-friendly content, how the project can be connected to ongoing public discussions, and how to serve the project's various stakeholders. The guidebook ends with key takeaways. We have included several real-life examples to give hands-on advice for expert communication through social media.

We acknowledge the previous research on social media. We have not written this guidebook to give exhaustive coverage of the pros and cons of Twitter. Instead, we have highlighted aspects that we think are important when the goal is to enable co-creation through social media. For those who like to read more on social media communication, its opportunities as well as its threats, we have enclosed several Further Readings boxes. Statistics were retrieved from Statista ([www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)).

This handbook was developed as part of the **Co-creating Service Innovations in Europe** project (CoSIE, 2017–2020) funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme.



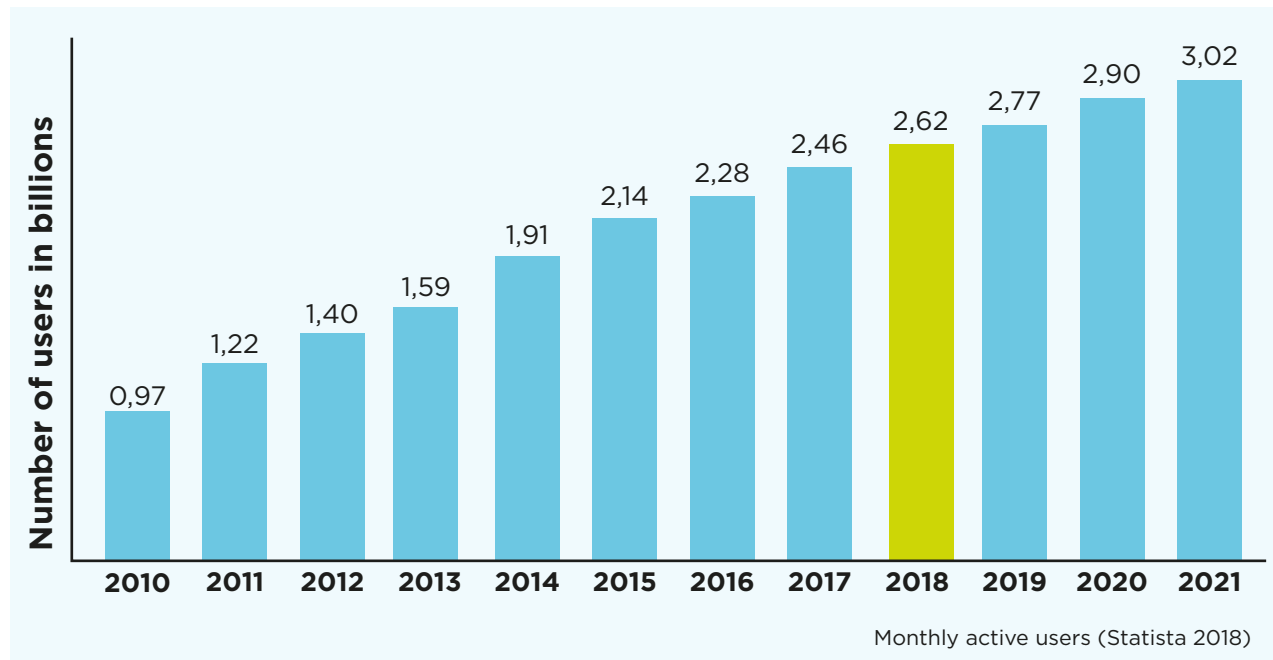
# **Social Media in a Nutshell**

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# Social Media in a Nutshell

There is no single and universally accepted definition of social media. Conventionally, it is used to loosely refer to the means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and exchange information in networks. Social media merges technology, people, and content. A social media ecosystem consists of a wide variety of platforms, such as social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), professional communities (e.g. LinkedIn), video and photo sharing services (e.g. YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest), instant messaging (e.g. WhatsApp, Skype), and shared workspaces and virtual worlds (e.g. GoogleDocs, SecondLife). During its short existence, it has transformed our communication habits in many ways. It has provided us with an open environment to connect and publish all kinds of content. The lack of gatekeepers has empowered people to express their voices. Based on numbers, it seems that there has been a societal need for social media. Before the launch of MySpace (established in 2003) and Facebook (established in 2004), we did not have any social media, whereas in 2018 we have hundreds of sites, which influence almost three billion users (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Number of social network users worldwide from 2010 to 2021



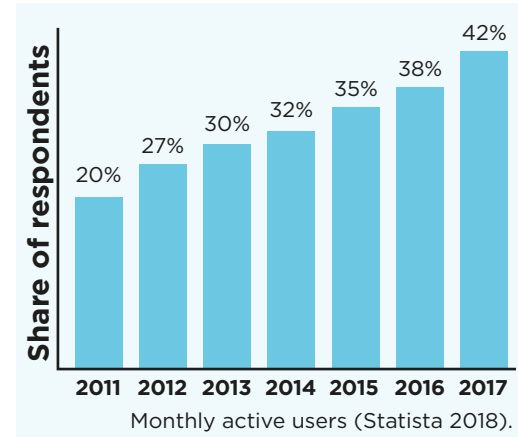


In the European Union, the number of people using social media on a daily basis has more than doubled since 2011, reaching 42 percent in 2017 (Fig. 2).

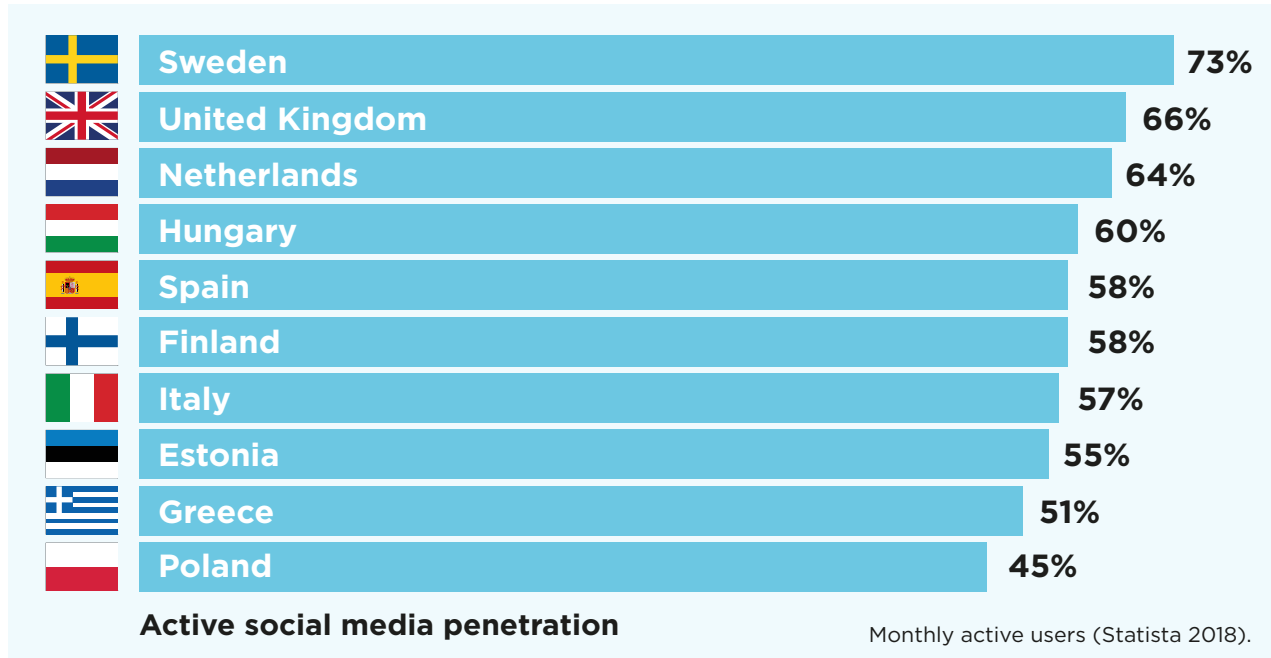
There are, however, differences between countries. The use of social media on a monthly basis varies in the CoSIE project's member states from 45 percent (Poland) to 73 percent (Sweden) (Fig. 3).

Different social media platforms have different abilities to contribute to organizational communication. The most popular site worldwide is Facebook (2.2 billion active users monthly in 2017), which provides a platform for connecting people and organizations with similar interests and enabling the creation of communities around these interests. While Facebook is primarily used for sharing and commenting the

**Fig. 2. Share of individuals who used online social networks in the European Union**



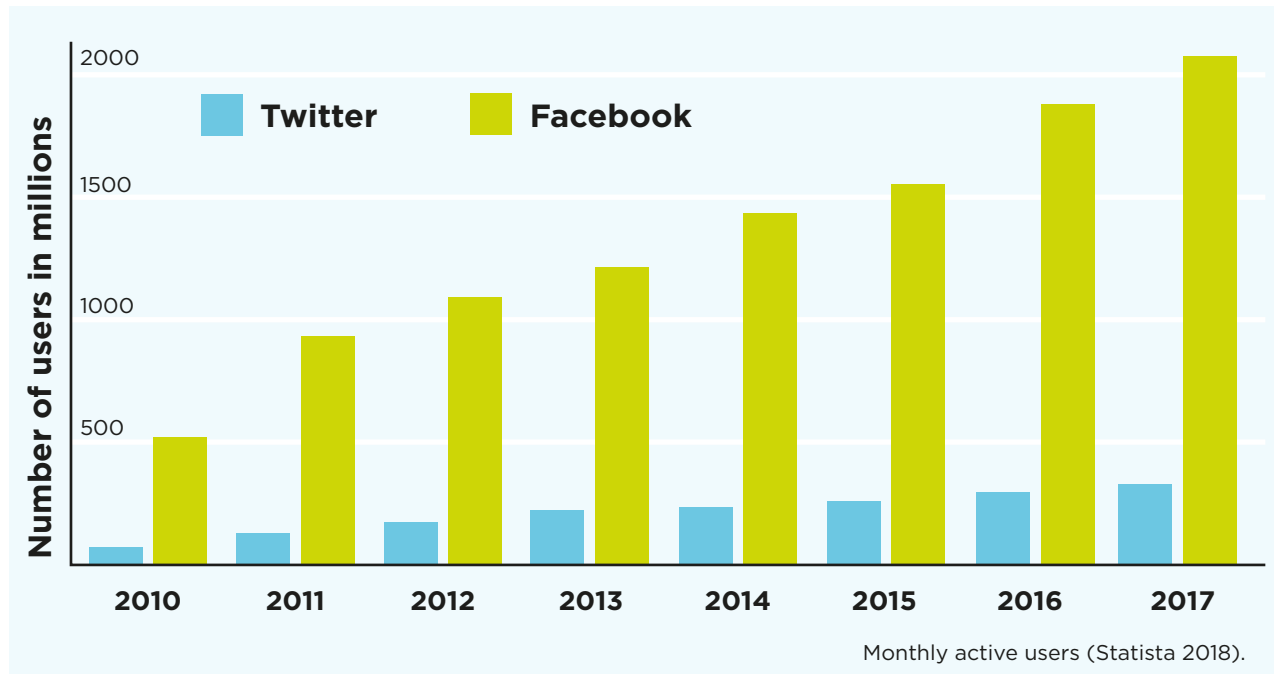
**Fig. 3. Active social media penetration in selected European countries (participating in the CoSIE project)**



good and bad moments in people’s lives, Twitter is a more professionally oriented site. The total number of users on Twitter is much lower than on Facebook (Fig. 4). As of the first quarter of 2018, Twitter had 330 million monthly active users. However, it is a popular site particularly among politicians, journalists, experts, and celebrities. Compared to Facebook status updates, tweets find their way to the traditional media more often. To follow people and organizations in Facebook, you typically have to have some connection (being a friend or liking them) to those you like to follow. Twitter, in contrast, allows registered users to follow whomever they want to. The openness and user profiles are the main reasons why this guidebook focuses on Twitter. However, saying this does not mean that the lessons this guidebook provides cannot be applied to other social media sites.

The rapid growth in the use of social media has also influenced our demands and expectations on institutions and organizations. As citizens and consumers, we appreciate immediate responses to our questions and through the channel we are familiar with. From a research project’s point of view, the new media landscape is a tricky one, because one-to-one communication has in many cases been displaced by one-to-many communication. The challenge is to promote positive “word-of-mouth” and hinder the spreading of negative information from one person to another.

**Fig. 4. Number of Facebook and Twitter users worldwide**





## Further Reading

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# Co-creative Communication

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# Co-creative Communication

The volume of information combined with the affective turn in social media debates have increased the complexity of communication. The challenge is to align strategic objectives with operational performance in a world where communication has become more uncontrollable than before. In order for communication to be effective, impactful, and responsive, this guidebook introduces a co-creative approach to communication (Fig. 5). Co-creative communication refers to the practices the project uses to collaborate with its stakeholders during the implementation of the project. It consists of three branches of communication: science communication, expert communication, and project communication.

Co-creative communication can be seen as an invitation to build knowledge that matters. Instead of one-way information flow from the project to the audience, co-creative communication aims to use social media as an arena for creating shared understanding. The public consumes the content provided by the project and provides information and knowledge of experience to the project.



**Fig. 5. Building blocks of co-creative communication**

Science communication (Fig. 6) aims to make research results accessible and meaningful to people who are not researchers themselves. Science communication deepens the societal impact of research. Social media particularly has provided laymen with the opportunity to engage directly with the researchers.

While science communication focuses on popularizing research results, expert communication (Fig. 7) goes beyond this and includes actions that promote experts' knowledge in a given domain. Through expert communication it is possible to widen the project's footprint and connect it with the public debate.

Project communication (Fig. 8) involves project specific information such as news and events. The aim is to promote the awareness of the project and ensure that relevant stakeholders are informed.

Fig. 6. Editors' pick: Science communication in Twitter

Reint Jan  
@ReintJanRenes

Seuraa

'Meer dan 100.000 mensen doen dit niet' ÓF 'anderen vinden dat u dit niet moet doen'? Hoe zet je via 'normcommunicatie' consumenten aan tot gewenst gedrag?

Een negatieve frame met injunctieve norm lijkt het beste te werken! 🚫📺📺📺📺

Beste communicatiestrategie voor gewenst gedrag  
'Eigenlijk best gek hè... dat je op veel meer plekken sigaretten kunt kopen dan brood?'. Deze nieuwste anti-rook campagne[1] is een voorbeeld van een  
swocc.nl

*"More than 100 000 people do not this OR other find that you should not do this? How to turn people to wished behaviour through the use of norm-communication? The use of a negative injunctive form seems to work best!"*

@ReintJanRenes is a professor at Utrecht University of Applied Science

Fig. 7. Editors' pick: Expert communication in Twitter

Zizi Papacharissi  
@zizip

Follow

From my interview with NY Times on our eternal social media timelines - [FB posts present a] timeline of who we were, of who we are now and who we would like to be," [I] said. "It's like this always-on story. It's difficult to disconnect that."

Want to Purge Your Social Media Timelines? Can You Spare a Few Hours? Facebook and Twitter don't make it easy to run your old posts through the scrubber. So our personal tech columnist took on the challenge.  
nytimes.com

@zizip is a professor at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Fig. 8. Editors' pick: Project communication in Twitter

innosi INNOSI  
@INNOSI\_H2020

Follow

Congratulations to the new #Cosie2020 consortium on bringing innovative methods to the co-creation of public services. 9 ambitious pilot studies underway!

@INNOSI\_H2020 is a consortium of 20 public universities and civil society organizations around Europe working to revise and improve social investment policy.



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# Twitter as Narrative Medium

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# Twitter as Narrative Medium

Twitter is a social media service that enables users to send short 280-character messages called tweets. Starting a Twitter is an easy task. Just sign up and create your profile (Fig. 9). Registered users can read and post tweets as well as follow other users via an update feed. A hashtag is a convenient way to denote or follow a topic conversation or participate in a larger linked discussion. In the CoSIE project, we use a #cosie2020 hashtag for improving the visibility and discoverability of the project.

Twitter is hardly on the list of the ten most popular social media platforms. However, it is widely used by politicians, journalists, experts in various domains, sportsmen, actors, and celebrities of all walks of life. Tweets from prime ministers and presidents, as well as from opposition leaders, are often cited in television news and newspapers. Twitter allows political leaders and their opponents a free channel to reach audiences without their messages being filtered by journalists.

For researchers and other experts, Twitter is a tempting media to promote research results and to participate in public discussion related to their field. Sportsmen, actors, and other celebrities use Twitter for branding themselves and interacting with their fans. Twitter has also been successfully harnessed for creating social movements. The most recent example is the #metoo campaign against abusive behaviour and for the right for equal opportunities. During the campaign, many celebrated directors, producers, and actors have been accused of misbehaving with actresses and female employees. Twitter has in a short period of time become something of a media echo chamber.

Fig. 9. How to start with Twitter

**How to use Twitter**

**CO SIE**  
Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe

**#cosie2020**

- 1 Sign up**  
You can sign up at twitter.com or download the Twitter app for your mobile device. After that you can register and select a name for yourself. In the world of twitter all the usernames have @-sign before the name itself.  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Username: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Find people to follow**  
Find people or organizations you want to follow: You will get their tweets on your feed.
- 3 Utilize hashtags**  
You can also search for hashtags and so follow trends. For example if you search for #cosie2020, Twitter will show you all the messages that have been written under that hashtag.

**#cosie2020**

**Tweet**  
A message that consists of 280 characters.

**Retweet (RT)**  
Re-sharing or giving credit to someone else's tweet.

**Mention**  
A way to reference another users by his username in a tweet. Users are notified when @mentioned.

**Feed**  
The stream of tweets you see on your homepage.

**Direct message (DM)**  
A private, 280-character message between two people. You may only DM a user who follows you.

**Hashtag**  
A way to denote or follow a topic of conversation or participate in a larger linked discussion.

Twitter is particularly suitable in research project communication for four reasons. Firstly, it can be used for improving the project's discoverability. Tweeting on a regular basis increases the odds that the project is also discoverable beyond its direct stakeholders. Tweets can be seen as searchable talk. Secondly, the visibility of the project can be increased through active participation in topical discussions. This can be done, for example, by a strategic use of hashtags. In addition to project-specific hashtags, it is useful for the project's visibility to also deploy trending and/or established hashtags. The hashtag acts as a kind of metadata that enables users to follow and interact with the project. Thirdly, discoverability and visibility lay the foundation for impactful Twitter communication. Tweets should contain unique insights that maintain the attention of key stakeholders and persuade new audiences. The more actionable results the project is able to tweet, the more impactful its communication becomes. Fourthly, Twitter is not only a channel for delivering messages from the project to the audience; it is also a source of new information.

By following relevant users and discussion (via hashtags), the project increases its ability to communicate in a more discoverable, visible and effective manner. At its best, Twitter communication creates a narrative continuum (Fig. 10) throughout the project's time span and beyond. The narrative can take several forms, depending on the set of frames we use to tell the story of a specific issue (Fig. 11).

Twitter has not only increased the amount of shared information, such as opinions and facts, but it has also inspired people to share their feelings about topics, whether they concern products and services or societal issues. In the early days of social media, there was an optimistic view that it is possible to strengthen societal consensus through discussions on social media platforms. Some enthusiasts suggested that Twitter is good for democratic processes. Currently, however, it seems that Twitter can be used not only for good but also for malicious purposes. We have seen that instead of fostering open discussions, Twitter has created bubbles of like-minded people that prevent people from understanding different perspectives. Deliberately creating and spreading disinformation and fake news has been used for damaging organizations' and people's reputations as well as for influencing public opinion and democratic processes.

Building a narrative continuum through Twitter aims both to promote fact-based public discussions and to hinder the spread of populism. The case is not to claim that research is infallible, but to remind the public that the research community is engaged with rigorous methodological standards and constantly attempts to challenge previous findings and create new ones. The open nature of Twitter allows a project to integrate into the wider society and fight against the denouncing of scientific knowledge.

**Fig. 10. Narrative continuum in Twitter**



Fig. 11. Editors' picks: Creating narrative in Twitter



**Tillitsverket** @tillitsverket Follow

"Samskapande är nyckeln till mänsklig hållbarhet" @DLundq @nackavarmdo #mänsklig hållbarhet2018 #tillit #samverkan #lek #tillitsverket

Samskapande är nyckeln till mänsklig hållbarhet!  
Om varje människa bara får bidra med sin unika skaparförmåga i sammanhang där våra gemensamma utmaningar är viktigare än målgruppsindelningar och låsta rollspel på arbetsmarknaden. Då kan både samhället och människan tillfriskna och det hållbara målen bli nåbara.  
/Daniel Lundqvist  
Founder NAV Sweden

#MÄNSKLIK HÅLLBARHET 2018

*"Co-creation is the key to human sustainability."*

@Tillitsverket is a Swedish initiative that wants to inspire and raise awareness about the importance of trust for the humanity of society and the world.



**Elisa Garcia España** @Elisa\_G\_Espana Seuraa

La inmensa mayoría de los penalistas académicos no apoyamos la #PrisionPermanenteRevisable El penalista del #ObjetivoPrisiónPermanente no nos representa Los supuestos de los q habla son inexistentes. + tratamientos + bienestar social - carcel = + paz social Demostrado!

**Pro Derechos Humanos** @APDHA  
Es comprensible la petición de los familiares de dureza en las penas, pero el Estado no puede legislar con las vísceras e impartir una suerte de venganza o justicia divina #ObjetivoPrisiónPermanente #NoALaPerpetua

Näytä tämä ketju

*"The vast majority of academics in criminology and criminal law do not support the #PrisionPermanenteRevisable The perspective of the #ObjectivePermanentPrison does not represent us."*

@Elisa\_G\_Espana is a Professor at the University of Malaga.



**Dim. Christopoulos** @dichristopoulos Seuraa

15 λεπτά για το μακεδονικό χθες στο Πάντειο: "Όσο πιο "εθνικά ευαίσθητα" είναι κάποια θέματα τόσο πιο κοινωνικά αναίσθητη η μεταχείρισή τους". Ευχαριστώ την @h\_epohi την @AvgiOnline και το @Poulantzas\_Inst για την πρόσκληση.

Το "Μακεδονικό" ζήτημα: Τότε και τώρα -Δημήτρης Χρισ...  
Φωτογραφία-βίντεο: Άγγελος Καλοδούκας  
youtube.com

*"15 minutes on the 'Macedonian' issue yesterday at Panteion University. When some issues are 'nationally sensitive' their treatment becomes 'socially insensitive'. I thank @h\_epohi, @AvgiOnline and @Poulantzas\_Inst for the invitation."*

@dichristopoulos is an Associate Professor at the Panteion University.



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# **Tweet and to Be Tweeted**

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# Tweet and to Be Tweeted

**F**rom the project's point of view, the people—experts—are the main communication resource. A person is always more interesting than a logo. Experts have multiple ways to benefit from social media. The main question is what kind of role the expert takes in the social network. If we compare the most used social media platforms, Twitter offers the most open playground. It has a flattened, all-encompassing audience that can be composed of both personal and professional contacts. Because of its explicitly public nature, Twitter becomes a double-sided platform that can be used in different ways. Every expert can decide what kind of role is the most suitable; but from the engaging content point of view, mixing up the personal and professional roles is usually the most effective way to build a professional brand.

The easiest way to use Twitter is simply to follow interesting users and the conversation around preferred topics. Open sharing is in the heart of Twitter, so following current news and fishing new information from preferred fields via hashtags are effortless ways to keep yourself up-to-date. There is nothing wrong in being a passive follower, but getting the best out of the social networks demands a more engaging touch. Sharing other users' content is step one. If all the experts working on a project re-tweet content related to the theme they are currently working with, it opens up a wider reach and sets up a possibility for discussion. Colleagues who share the best reading tips or give interesting professional insights are valued in the coffee room, but platforms like Twitter give a chance for these gems to really fly (Fig. 12).

The next level of participation is creating your own content. Share an interesting piece of news, blogpost or article, give your own view on the topic, and add a few hashtags—that's it. The crucial step towards co-creative communication is giving something from yourself. Constant link dumping—although simple link-sharing or re-tweeting is far from a neutral act—without offering your own angle or opinion, easily creates distance between you and your audience.

The trickiest part for experts in social media is usually joining the discussion. Opening yourself up for conversation can be frightening because the bar might be set too high. What sort of conversations are waiting for me in the dark corners of the internet? Can I reason my views well enough? I have many things in my hands; do I have time for this? But despite all the possible downsides, diving into Twitter gives an expert an opportunity to create something together with other professionals. And in a broader scale, it gives projects a possibility to involve many more people in problem-solving. To tweet and be tweetable requires the will to say things out loud, the boldness to show your personality, and the eagerness to share and discuss. It is easier said than done; but in the end, it is about simply doing it step by step.

Fig. 12. Editors' pick: Interacting in Twitter

The screenshot shows a Twitter thread on a white background. At the top is a tweet from Katie Mack (@AstroKatie) with a cartoon profile picture, posted 15 hours ago. Her text reads: "Honestly climate change scares the heck out of me and it makes me so sad to see what we're losing because of it." Below her tweet are icons for reply, retweet (29), like (122), and direct message. Below that is a reply from Gary P Jackson (RAT) (@gary4205) with a profile picture of a globe, posted 7 hours ago. His text reads: "@AstroKatie Maybe you should learn some actual SCIENCE then, and stop listening to the criminals pushing the #GlobalWarming SCAM!" Below his tweet are icons for reply, retweet (7), like, and direct message. Below the reply is a retweet notification: "Katie McGarvey Retweeted". At the bottom is a reply from Katie Mack (@AstroKatie) with a blue follow button, containing the text: "@gary4205 I dunno, man, I already went and got a PhD in astrophysics. Seems like more than that would be overkill at this point."

@AstroKatie is Assistant Professor of Physics  
at North Carolina State University.



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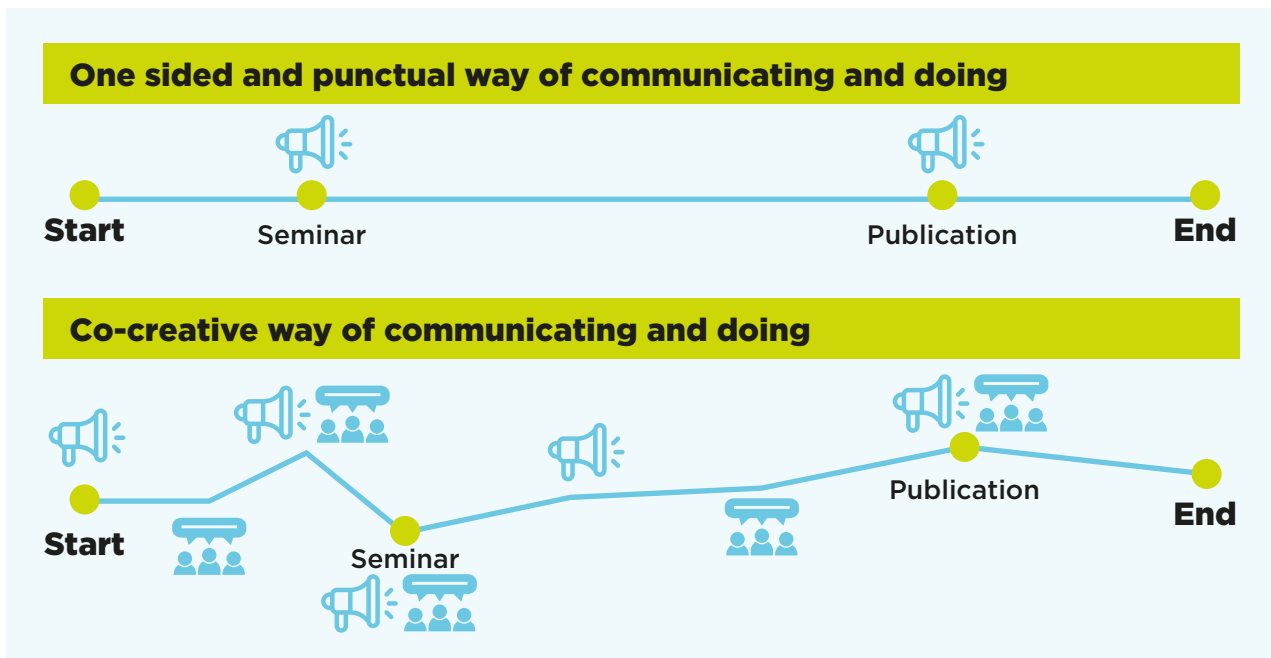
# **Finding and Creating Audiences**

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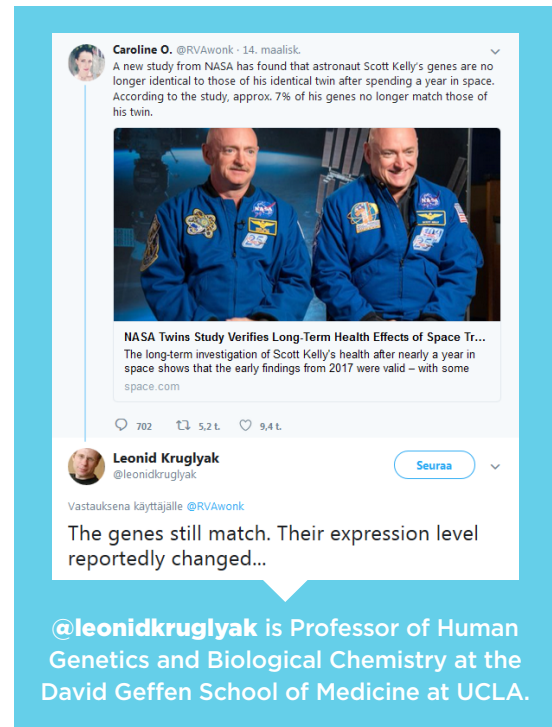
# Finding and Creating Audiences

Communication is always a marathon, not a sprint, and Twitter makes no difference (Fig. 13). If an expert does not have a lot of individual social capital in a Bourdieusian sense (like celebrities have), the journey in Twitter starts from point zero. Zero followers means no audience for your tweets, but Twitter is the promised land for audience seekers. Utilizing hashtags is the easiest route to interesting content. By scanning the most used hashtags of one's field of expertise, a new user can identify meaningful influencers and professionals to follow. Also joining the conversations found via hashtags gives a new tweeter visibility; and in popular threads, a reach for a single tweet can quickly rise high. For a new user or a project that is starting to build an audience around their theme, continuing communication is crucial. Especially in projects, communication often focuses on certain key points (seminars, publication, etc.), but a co-creative way of communication demands long-term thinking and doing. The aim is to make the thinking process transparent and to crowdsource problem-solving. Open and dialogical communication can lead to results that the project team would not have figured out otherwise.

Fig. 13. Continuing co-creative communication in a project



Rapidly rising clusters are characteristic of Twitter. People gather around current topics (news, TV shows, sport events, etc.) and share their opinions. These audiences rise and fall in the Twitter sphere constantly. For projects, this opens up at least two aspects they can benefit from. Events are great ways to build audiences and gain attention, both in the real world and on digital platforms. Communication and marketing before the event is at least as important as lighting up the discussion during the event. In these kinds of cases, audiences don't usually fabricate themselves; instead, they have to be built. Also tweeting out key takeaways and thoughts after the event is important and part of the continuing communication. Rapidly rising clusters can be utilized also by joining the conversation. The purpose is not just to stamp your agenda with a trending hashtag but to try to create connections between the project and the current discussion—setting project themes into new contexts. For example, connections from co-creation can be drawn to a range of different fields in society. Joining the discussion is effective when experts can give a new point of view or challenge public opinion. Poking relevant stakeholders on Twitter by drawing them into discussion (tagging, sharing their content, etc.) can also create a wider audience (Fig. 14).



**Fig. 14. Editors' pick: Connecting in Twitter**

Knowing your audience is one of the key things when producing content that resonates with your target group. Twitter, for example, offers a free analytics tool that can give insight into the characteristic features and essential demographics to be taken into account. The most important thing is the hunch—feeling that this tweet probably gets likes, replies, and lightens up discussion. But getting the right hunch requires lots of work, which means tweeting different kinds of content over a long period of time.

Communication results should be monitored and collated throughout the lifecycle of the project. Two approaches are of particular utility. A sentiment analysis refers to the use of natural language processing, text analysis and computational linguistics to identify and extract subjective information in source materials. It is based on a very simple idea: texts are subjective and may express some personal feeling, view, emotion, or belief. Sentiment analysis provides a project with a useful tool to improve its ability to evaluate how its communication activities affect stakeholders. Social network analysis, in turn, is a technique that can be used for increasing the understanding of who is connected and who is participating within the social media networks. It enables the project to target communication activities by identifying influencers and key stakeholders.



## Further Reading

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# Serving Your Audiences

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# Serving Your Audiences

**T**witter is a new communication environment, but the motivation for using it can be addressed with the uses and gratifications theory, which represents a synthesis of many studies, including the gratification typologies of traditional mass media. The five categories are information seeking, entertainment, social interaction, self-expression, and impression management (see Table 1).

The information-seeking type of communication aims at lowering the barriers to information-sharing through networks of trust and shared interests. It refers to people who mostly use Twitter to learn about news and events, recommendations about products and content, or about any subject of their interest.

**Table 1. Use categories explaining the motivation for using Twitter**

<b>USE CATEGORY</b>	<b>MOTIVATIONS</b>
<b>Information-seeking</b>	To learn about news and events
<b>Entertainment</b>	To entertain oneself
<b>Social interaction</b>	To exchange social support, to maintain existing relationships, and to meet new friends
<b>Self-expression</b>	To share information about themselves and to show who they are and what they like
<b>Impression management</b>	To give others a positive impression of oneself




**Fig. 16. Editors' pick: Self-expression and entertainment in Twitter**

**Cath Ennis**  
@enniscath

Seuraa

"um, Dr Schrodinger? I opened the box and, well... we may have a problem"



**@enniscath** Former research scientist and is now a project manager/grant editor in the field of human genomics

**Fig. 17. Editors' pick: Impression management in Twitter**

**Emily Lakdawalla**  
@elakdawalla

Seuraa

So you folks may have heard that I have a book coming out at the end of the month, on the Design and Engineering of Curiosity [goodreads.com/book/show/3608 ...](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3608...) [amazon.com/Design-Engineer](https://www.amazon.com/Design-Engineer)

...



**@elakdawalla** Senior Editor & Planetary Evangelist, The Planetary Society. Planetary scientist, public speaker. Wrote a book on Curiosity rover. Asteroid 274860.

**Fig. 18. Editors' pick: Framing issue in Twitter**

**Tytti Määttä**  
@tyttimaatta

Seuraa

Asutko kaupungissa? Tunnetko olevasi täysin urbanisoitunut. Onko #maaseutu sinulle käymätön paikka? Toivon, että seuraisit minua. Kerron elämästä harvaan asutulla maaseudulla. Haluan laajentaa omaa ja sinun "kuplaasi" olemalla yhteydessä. #some #ymmärrys #vuoropuhelu #kaupunki

*"Are you living in a city? Do you feel totally urbanized? Is #countryside unknown to you? I hope you could follow me. We tweets tell about life in rural area. I like to expand my own and your bubble."*

**@tyttimaatta** Mayor of Kuhmo City: tweets about her duties and life in rural area.

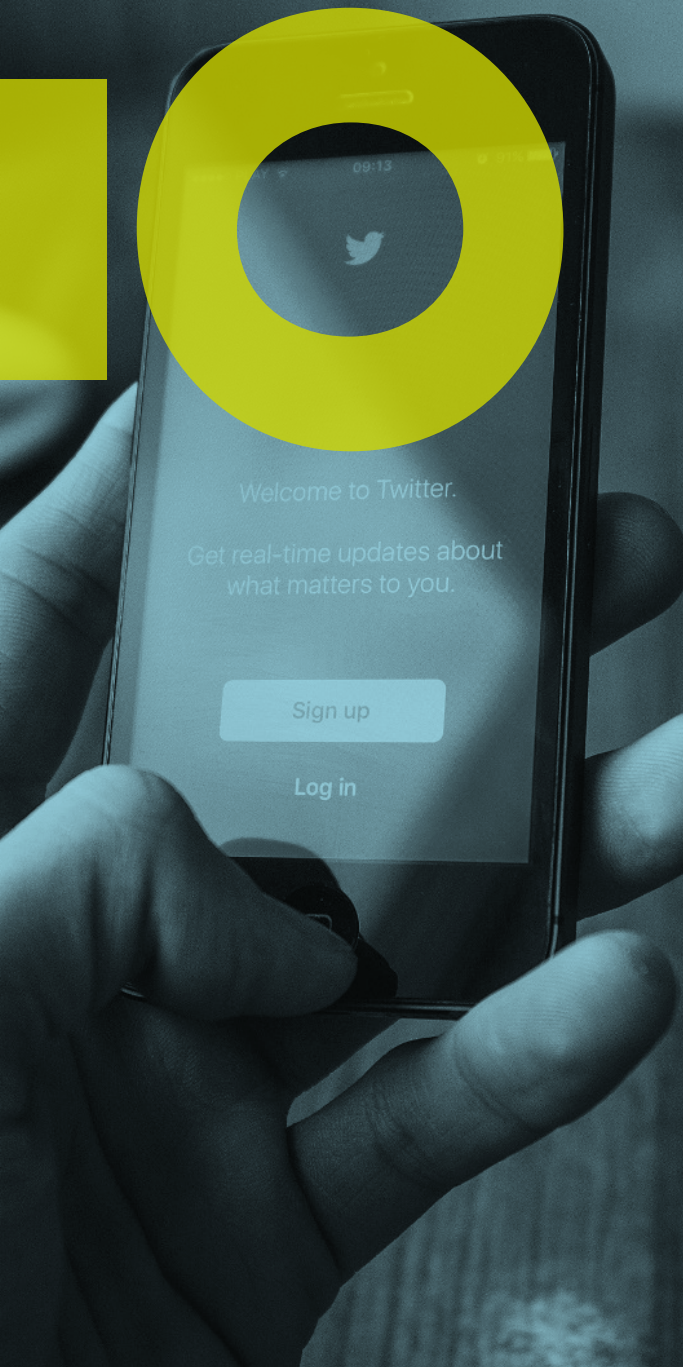




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# Key Takeaways

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## **Be interactive and present!**

- Remember to listen.

## **Be interesting and different!**

- Surprise occasionally.

## **Be relevant or be ignored!**

- Frame your message.

## **Be humble but not sugary!**

- Thank when appropriate.

## **Be convincingly unprofessional!**

- Show your expertise.

## **Be honest!**

- Misdoings will be revealed.