



FAST TAKE

TWITTER

TESTING A 280-CHARACTER LIMIT

September 26th 2017

TWITTER DOUBLES THE CHARACTER LIMIT FOR TWEETS

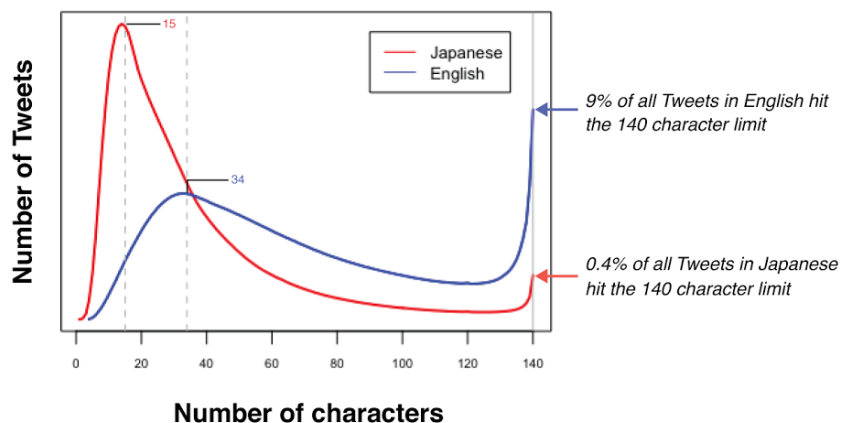
This week Twitter launched a test of 280-character tweets, twice the length of the previous 140-character tweet limit. The goal? To offer users more opportunities to express themselves more fully, no matter the language used.

According to Twitter’s user research, the discrepancy across languages can make it hard for some users to properly express themselves. For example, Twitter claims that only 0.4% of Tweets sent in Japanese have 140 characters, while 9% of Tweets sent in English have 140 characters. By removing the friction and frustration that can result from trying to trim a thought or sentiment down to the previous 140-character limit, Twitter is looking to drive positive sentiment - and ideally increased usage.

Currently Twitter is testing this with a small group to ensure the right balance between Twitter users being able to share their complete sentiment, while maintaining the short-form content and thought pieces that makes Twitter unique. As the company made clear, “Twitter is about brevity. It’s what makes it such a great way to see what’s happening. Tweets get right to the point with the information or thoughts that matter. That is something we will never change.”

The graph below shows number of Tweets vs. Number of characters in English vs. Japanese with the 140-character limit (source: Twitter)

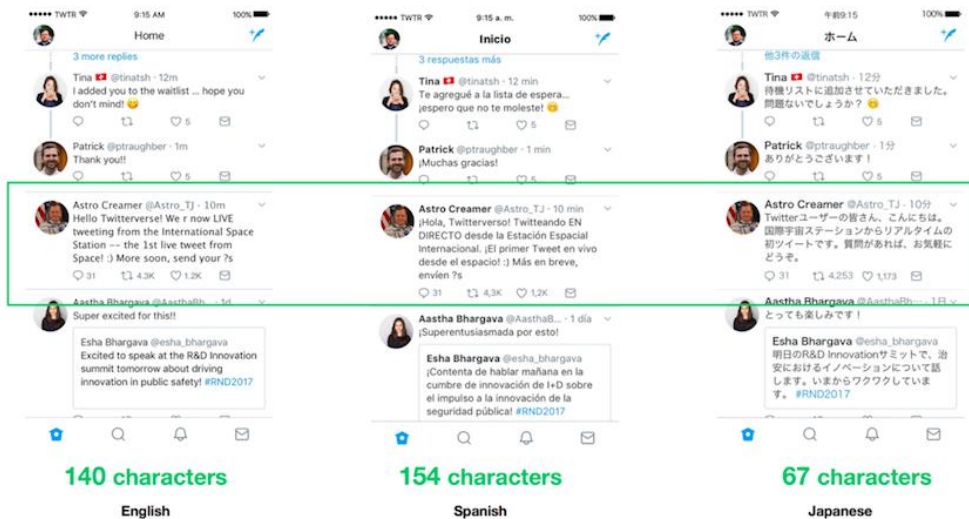
- Most Tweets in Japanese have 15 characters
- Most Tweets in English have 34 characters



The following picture shows the same Tweet in different languages with the new character limit (source: Twitter)

"There's a sense of loss," says Noah Mallin, Head of Content at MEC. "The 140-limit really forced you into the clearest, most distilled expression."





WHAT'S NEXT FOR MARKETERS & TWITTER?

Marketers and Twitter users have already become accustomed to sharing longer thoughts on the platform by getting creative, such as using screenshots and threading tweets together. In some ways, this test simply reflects existing user behavior.

The new character limit, if rolled out on a larger scale, does allow for a more in-depth conversation for brands that have mastered the always-on repartee Twitter thrives on. For more complex messages, or even public statements, brands had already shifted to using images with text to get around the 140-character limit. 280 characters would allow for more flexibility to pair an image with a statement.

Long term, this change, if it becomes the new norm, reinforces the notion that nothing is sacred with Jack Dorsey's leadership – paradoxically having a founder in charge means the platform can take more risks. Twitter is still drilling down into what the core value of the platform is – and, as much fun as it was to hone a sentence down to its essence or at least to something like a Prince song title, it's also a platform quirk that keeps new users out. If not radical brevity, what Twitter still affords is instant access to a big swath of humanity and that's hugely compelling – perhaps more than ever. This change puts that front and center.

This also suggests that other radical changes could be in the works and ultimately that should be exciting to marketers and users; Twitter can't grow and expand without changing, even if the initial reaction is negative. Stay tuned for the results of the test, and what changes may be becoming permanent.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Twitter's blog post](#)

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