NEED/OPPORTUNITY
On 8 June, three days before the start of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the Gautrain commenced operations of its first phase between the business hub of Sandton and the OR Tambo International Airport. Although not a FIFA project, work on this section of the rail system was accelerated to be ready for the global soccer event, which was a source of pride throughout Africa. In the months leading up to the opening, skepticism prevailed as public transport is considered unreliable and unsafe in South Africa. For the economically active, the use of the private vehicle has for many years been the only mode of transport, which has resulted in severe traffic congestion in the Gauteng province, the economic heartland of South Africa. Many potential users of the Gautrain and its bus system had never used public transport before and were uninformed about the benefits of a world-class public transport system such as Gautrain and hesitant to use it. Adding to this skepticism, the Gautrain project has been clouded by controversy since its inception, with many commentators arguing that the money spent on the project would be better allocated to the poorest of the poor and other social ills facing South Africa.

Changing attitudes and behavior required the use of integrated social media tactics in support of Gautrain’s communication strategy. The social Web is where relevant stakeholders converge without the traditional boundaries that segment content consumers and content creators. This creates an opportunity for social media users to collaborate in the production of content and, in the process, become brand advocates for Gautrain. By listening to and participating in social media conversations, Gautrain grabbed the opportunity to build authentic, two-way relationships with relevant stakeholders. Considering that Gautrain is a government project, the use of social media also allowed transparency, accountability and access to information for citizens. With this in mind, social media communication was approached from the point of view of engaging with participants while simultaneously conveying strategic messages to change attitudes and behavior.

Furthermore, the team identified an opportunity to extend online relationships to the real world, thus reinforcing authenticity, transparency and accountability. In this manner, Gautrain’s social media approach was integrated with broader public relations issues management, brand management, environmental scanning and corporate governance.

INTENDED AUDIENCE/STAKEHOLDERS
The intended audience included social media users and potential passengers. The online social media users and mobile technology users were making use of the following:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Blogs
- Wikipedia
- YouTube
- Flickr
Potential passengers were identified as:
- Economically active M1, N1, N3 and R21 motorists commuting to/from Johannesburg/Pretoria or between Pretoria/Johannesburg and the OR Tambo International Airport.
- Owners and users of motor vehicles who can afford or have access to a car but are unwilling to use public transport.
- Younger people with a household income of above R15,000 belonging to LSM 6–10.
- International tourists and airline passengers travelling to/from OR Tambo International Airport.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
The goal was to position Gautrain as a total integrated public transport service with attributes of safety, security, predictability, reliability and comfort for people on the move.

Social media objectives were to:
- Stimulate predominantly positive consumer conversations about Gautrain’s attributes and brand equity with relationships, pride and freedom at the core.
- Stimulate predominantly positive consumer conversation themes about Gautrain’s attributes and the various construction and operations milestones and deliverables that are being achieved.
- Ensure that 80 percent of social media conversations about Gautrain’s attributes are driven by consumers.
- Mobilize at least 60 mentions per day via social media such as Twitter, Facebook, blogs, Flickr, social bookmarking, YouTube and others.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW
This solution was an accumulation of relationship building through social media that was initiated as early as 2008. In South Africa, social media exploded in 2007, with a mere 2,953 blogs reported by the middle of the year compared to the United States’ 72 million blogs for that period. Gautrain believes that when building relationships and engaging in authentic dialogue, the desired outcome should be measured qualitatively, not solely on high exposure figures or traditional advertising value equivalents. In fact, Gautrain believes that the value of a social media user acting as a brand advocate or defending the brand in public is immeasurable. Long-term, continuous relationship building with key social media opinion leaders is far more valuable than hundreds of fickle fans, likes and re-tweets. Sustainable relationship building further encourages collaborative content production. The result is that user-generated social media content absorbs and aggregates strategic project messages.
Messages included the following:

- Gautrain is a world-class public transport system.
- Gautrain is a government initiative that brings multiple benefits to the Gauteng province, such as economic development, job creation and creating a better life for all.
- The government delivers services through the provision of a public transport project of national importance.

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES
Integrated social media tactics included the following:

#TWEETUPONRAILS
Following a suggestion from one of @TheGautrain’s followers, a tweetup was held at Gautrain’s train depot on 13 March 2010. Hash tagged #tweetuponrails by followers, 200 social media users attended after being invited via Gautrain’s Twitter and Facebook accounts. An interactive and informal question and answer session was hosted by the project manager and other senior officials after a ride on the test track. At the time, #tweetuponrails was reportedly the largest tweetup in South Africa to date. #tweetuponrails became a trending topic on Twitter photo site Twicsy, and on the morning of the tweetup, Twitter users not attending the event were complaining that the hundreds of #tweetuponrails tweets were slowing down their feeds. @The Gautrain joined the conversation, which started before and continued for days after the event. Within hours of the event, countless blogs, Flickr and Picasa photo albums, YouTube and Zoopy videos, as well as several Facebook status updates, comments and photos were published. User-generated content created at the tweetup was also shared on Gautrain’s Facebook fan page wall, which extended the conversation. Furthermore, an application was installed on Gautrain’s history blog that scrolled live #tweetuponrails tweets.

TWITTER BLANKET DRIVE
@TheGautrain supported and attended an annual event in South Africa that sees Twitter followers establishing national collection points for blankets for the needy around 29 May 2010. @TheGautrain attended the Sandton collection event and tweeted about the evening’s progress along with fellow Twitter users. Tweets also scrolled on the Twitter Blanket Drive website.

FACEBOOK FAN DEPOT VISIT
On 4 March 2010, 25 Facebook fans were invited to a sneak preview of the train. Fans were given the opportunity to see the train at the depot in Midrand and to have a look behind the scenes at where the central control center manages the signaling, CCTV cameras, and overall operations of the bus and train system. After their visit, fans posted their photos and shared their experiences.

GAUTRAIN TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION SOCIAL MEDIA VISIT
A group of 20 social media users were taken on a tour of tunneling operations on 27 June. Several photos were posted on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and various blogs. One of these photos won a local community newspaper competition and was chosen as the photo of the week.
SOCIAL MEDIA ATTEND COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATIONS EVENT
For Gautrain’s official commencement of operations event, which was celebrated on 5 June 2010 with an inaugural train ride and the cutting of ribbons at stations, 15 Twitter followers were invited to report about the event as citizen journalists. They enjoyed the same privileges as mainstream media, including access to a media room, full media kits and accompanying dignitaries and mainstream media on the inaugural train ride. Social media followers tweeted live from the event, updated their Facebook statuses as the evening progressed, posted videos on YouTube and reported about their experiences in their blogs.

Gautrain Inaugural Breakfast Run (#GIBR)
Social media users initiated a Facebook and Twitter event tagged the #GIBR, whereby they invited anyone interested to come and ride the very first train that departed at 5:24 a.m. on 8 June, the day that Gautrain officially commenced operations. Social media users tweeted, uploaded photos and posted Facebook status updates and blogs to share their historic experience. @TheGautrain joined the #GIBR conversation. These and other Gautrain related tweets posted during the first week of operations also scrolled on the Gautrain History blog page by installing a Scribble Live application.

Gautrain Flickr Account
Gautrain progress photos were uploaded and shared in a photo stream. Photographers also shared their photos in the Gautrain group pool.

Gautrain History Blog
Social media users were encouraged to share their comments and upload their photos of Gautrain on a blog created by Gautrain, called the GauHistory Blog. The aim of the history blog was to facilitate the writing of Gautrain’s history through the eyes of social media users. The blog also shares all Gautrain related tweets, Facebook status updates, YouTube videos, Flickr photos and blogs.

Media Visits
Social media are invited to attend construction site visits along with mainstream media. They tweet and update their Facebook statuses to share their experience with comments and photos while @TheGautrain joins the conversation.

@TheGautrain Tweets and Gautrain Facebook Fan Page Status Updates
In addition to answering questions and engaging in dialogue with followers, regular updates, videos and photos are posted. Due to the immediacy of Twitter and Facebook, it is also used as a medium for monitoring and communicating continuously during crises. Regular updates were posted during events, including:

- Media site visits.
- Arbor Day.
- The SA National Guide Dogs Association’s usage of the system to train dogs in helping the visually impaired to use the system.
- National Car Free Day.
- Charity events where terminally ill children from Reach for a Dream are hosted to fulfill their wish for going on a ride on the Gautrain.
LUNCH TWEETUP
Selected Twitter followers and bloggers with an interest in spatial development were invited for an intimate lunch and tweetup at the Gautrain Raddison Blue Hotel. Situated opposite the Gautrain Sandton Station, the business hub of Gauteng, the hotel gives a view of the impact of Gautrain on the city skyline where several new high-rise buildings are being built. Being close to the Gautrain station, the name of the hotel was branded to reflect its location. The senior project engineer, who was involved in land use planning, chatted with the social media followers as did the general manager of the hotel, who spoke about the impact of Gautrain on business.

GAUTRAIN YOUTUBE CHANNEL
Videos produced by the Gautrain project were uploaded and shared on a Gautrain YouTube channel. These videos included construction updates, Gautrain corporate advertisements, instructions about how to use the system and system features. These videos were also posted on Facebook and Twitter.

SOCIAL BOOKMARKING
Applications like RSS feeds and content sharing through Google Buzz, Digg, Blogger, Aim Share, Stumbleupon and others were added to the Gautrain corporate website and Gautrain History Blog. Also included were local African aggregator and the sharing platform Afrigator.

GAUTRAIN WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE
Although the Gautrain Wikipedia article was initiated by users who also regularly update the content, Gautrain also makes regular contributions to the page.

The social media budget comprises R10,000 per month, which is spent on monthly data encoding for evaluation and tracking, software subscription, reporting, and trend analysis for strategic input.

Before embarking on social media initiatives, research was conducted with 5,039 respondents to evaluate Gautrain’s website in 2009. Results relating to social media revealed that:

- Sixty percent of respondents would like to subscribe to RSS feeds.
- Thirty-eight percent of respondents belong to Facebook.
- Only 48 percent of the respondents have broadband Internet connections.

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES
By 1 November 2010, Google Analytics revealed that 29 percent of Gautrain website traffic was generated via referring sites as follows:

- Wikipedia accounts for 100 percent new visits.
- Twitter accounts for 100 percent new visits.
- Facebook.com accounts for 69 percent new visits.
- Twitter.com accounts for 80 percent new visits.
- m.facebook.com accounts for 66 percent new visits.
- Feedburner (RSS feeds) accounts for 9.32 percent of visits.
It is important to note that the evaluation of social media is not an exact science and may vary marginally depending on the software measurement programs used. Evaluation from January to November 2010 established that:

- Gautrain received about 51 mentions per day.
- Based on the above, it is expected that about 8,528,280 people were exposed to the Gautrain message each month online (excluding online advertising activities). This amounts to approximately R1.7 million (US$24,282.90) worth of advertising value equivalency each month.
- Social media conversation is largely driven by consumers, with 83 percent of the volume coming from them directly. Almost all of the consumer conversation is positive.
- In rank order of the most to the least frequent, the following social media sources were used:
  1. Twitter: 97 percent
  2. Google blog: 50 percent
  3. Stumbleupon: 40 percent
  4. Facebook: 25 percent
  5. Flickr: 20 percent
  6. Yahoo News: 10 percent
  7. Ask: 10 percent
  8. Truveo: 7 percent
  9. Bing: 6 percent
  10. Picasaweb: 2 percent
  11. MySpace: 2 percent
  12. YouTube: 2 percent
  13. Google Video: 2 percent
  14. Yahoo: 1 percent

- In rank order, the following conversation themes occurred in relation to Gautrain:
  1. Station
  2. Sandton
  3. Africa
  4. News
  5. World
  6. South time
  7. Bus
  8. Cup
  9. First
  10. Transport
  11. Property
  12. Rhodesfield