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Study on Current Perceptions of Ebola Reveals Public Remains Scared and Skeptical

Research Undertaken in Support of Strategy Summit for Fighting Ebola

New York, December 1, 2014---A high level of concern and an equally high level of ignorance about medical facts, real or perceived, continue to fuel conversations about Ebola in social media and the press, even as the disease drops out of the headlines.

In support of *Strategies for Fighting Ebola: A Columbia University Summit to Help End the Epidemic*, taking place today at the Columbia Club in New York City, MavenMagnet, a multinational big data-based research company, conducted a study to understand the current U.S. public perceptions of Ebola.

The Summit is sponsored by: Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University School of Nursing, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia Business School Alumni Club of New York, The Columbia Alumni Association, and The Columbia University Club of New York.

The nationally balanced, projectable sample of 2,090, was drawn from an analysis of conversations about Ebola from a wide range of digital sources including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, forums, community chat rooms, press, and other platforms between October 20, 2014 and November 20, 2014.

“With the vast majority of the conversations (41%) centered on discussions of the **Medical Understanding** behind the virus (i.e. the causes, prevention, effects, treatments, etc.), only 4% of the conversations were positive indicating a continuing high level of concern about the disease and a continuing lack of knowledge about medical facts,” said MavenMagnet CEO Aditya Ghuwalewala.

The key words which had the greatest impact in the conversations were: **scared, plot and airborne**. The reference to Ebola being part of a plot was, of course, highly charged, as was the reference to airborne which remains both a very hot and misunderstood topic.



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Skepticism and Fear were the second most discussed topics and the focus of 18% of the conversations with **Controversy** a close third at 14%. Disturbingly, **Racial Stigma** also was part of 11% of the conversations.

On the positive side, 14% of the conversations referenced the importance of **Global Solidarity** in fighting Ebola. Awareness of celebrity initiatives such as those by Bob Geldof and BandAid, drove the solidarity references, with mentions in 58% of the conversations on Global Solidarity. Clearly, celebrity events are noticed and have the potential to have an even greater positive effect.

Surprisingly, both references to President Obama and hospitals were few and had very low impact.

About MavenMagnet

MavenMagnet, a multinational research company, uses big data to uncover consumer and market insights across a broad cross-section of demographic and psychographic segments.

MavenMagnet's proprietary technology platform aggregates and contextually analyzes data from a wide range of dynamic sources including the social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, and more broadly to include communities, forums, blogs, chat rooms, press, etc. MavenMagnet conducts research at both the corporate and brand level for Fortune 100 companies as well as higher education and non-profit organizations. The actionable insights are used in a wide variety of applications including brand equity, brand reputation, competitive analysis, consumer journey, communications planning and tracking campaign effectiveness.

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