

No masking Ramaphosa's humour: SA responds to new challenge

Issued by [Meltwater](#)

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On Thursday, 23 April 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation regarding the easing of the national lockdown, which will come into effect on 1 May 2020. At the end of his speech, he picked up a mask to demonstrate and encourage South Africans to continue exercising safety measures by wearing a mask whenever leaving their homes. But his demonstration ended up in a masking mishap that saw South African social media users respond in an infamously humorous fashion.

“ What a grewt way to end a speech 💎💎♥️👉 yuuh this part eased the stress 💎💎💎💎💎💎#Ramaphosa pic.twitter.com/QxCPYRr6W4— Phindii (@Phindii11) [April 23, 2020](#) ”

With a new challenge born, and some light-hearted humour to cheer up South Africans, Meltwater, the global leader in media intelligence, analysed social media conversations surrounding this moment, the #facemaskchallenge that emerged and the posts that still showed nothing but respect for our president.

The memes from that mask moment

Following the moment where Ramaphosa appeared to struggle with putting on his mask on Thursday evening, social media was abuzz with the quick reactions and memes that soon followed.

“ President trying to warn us about Level 7 of Corona #ramaphosa pic.twitter.com/ishW4PBmnF— The Instigator (@Am_Blujay) [April 23, 2020](#) ”

“ "When will you come see me ?" ”

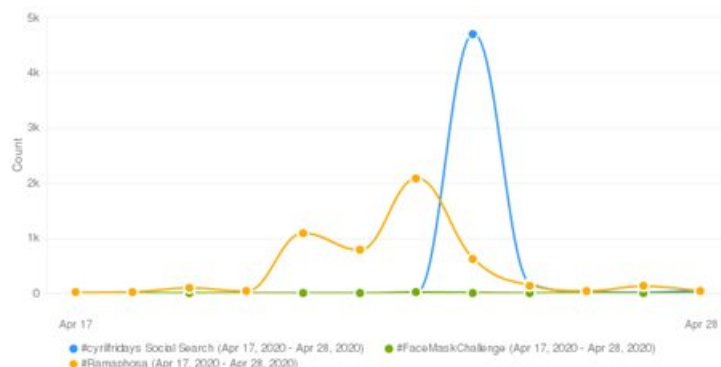
Me: #level4 #Ramaphosa pic.twitter.com/FYNhesrJkP— 💎💎C💎💎💎💎 (@KuseniMfumu) [April 23, 2020](#) ”

The face mask soon became an eye mask in the eyes of South African Twitter, prompting many users to make reference to a scene of Sandra Bullock in *Bird Box*, as well as joining in on the humour by creating more memes from the masking moment.

The hashtag, #Ramaphosa, has been mentioned just over 11,000 times on social media since the start of April, but the hashtag was used the most after Ramaphosa's national address on Thursday evening. Other hashtags that emerged from this were #CyrilFridays and #FaceMaskChallenge.

Media Exposure

| Filters: Country



Total media exposure, in numbers, for '#Cyrilfridays' (blue), '#FaceMaskChallenge' (green) and '#Ramaphosa' (orange) between 17 April and 28 April 2020

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While #Ramaphosa mentions on 23 April 2020 showed predominantly negative feelings among online users, as indicated by the data below, this was largely due to the @PresidencyZA Twitter account relaying Ramaphosa's speech on the impact of the coronavirus in the country, as well as negative reactions from South Africans regarding the cigarette ban being lifted.

Sentiment on #Ramaphosa

| Filters: Country



Social media sentiment analysis, in numbers, on #Ramaphosa during April 2020

[click to enlarge](#)

But 23 April 2020 also saw #Ramaphosa received the highest number of positive reactions among social media users in South Africa within the month of April. From the easing of restrictions to the memes that emerged that evening, it was clear that South Africans have taken note of Ramaphosa's leadership during this time.

“ It's remarkable to see a nation speak so well of their President... For once. Despite the humour this evening we still think you're doing a good job. [#Ramaphosa](#)—Bridget Pike (@brigda) [April 23, 2020](#) ”

A new challenge is born

Out of this moment emerged the social media challenge, #facemaskchallenge, which caused a humorous stir on social

media right after Ramaphosa's speech. Garnering a social reach of nearly 66,000 Twitter users on 23 April 2020, the social media platform was, indeed, flooded with #facemaskchallenge posts from South Africans, [as one user mentioned](#).

“ #FaceMaskChallenge Accepted. pic.twitter.com/qsEu32hKo1— Lebo• (@MoTjoviH) April 23, 2020 ”

#CyrilMaskChallenge also emerged as an engaging hashtag on social media on Friday 24 April, with just under 2,000 mentions and South African Twitter users sharing their unique ways of accepting the new challenge.

“ Challenge accepted pic.twitter.com/Ckl3lhtmPZ— DEMANDER (@Demander9) April 23, 2020 ”

But while the challenge emerged following Ramaphosa's national address to South Africa, other African countries have also engaged with the challenge and hashtag. Nigeria is the number one country to use #facemaskchallenge (44.94%) mainly to encourage others to participate in the challenge and share images of how users are incorporating face masks into their everyday outfits. The Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa round up the top three, respectively at 18.54% and 16.29%.

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Heat Map on #facemaskchallenge



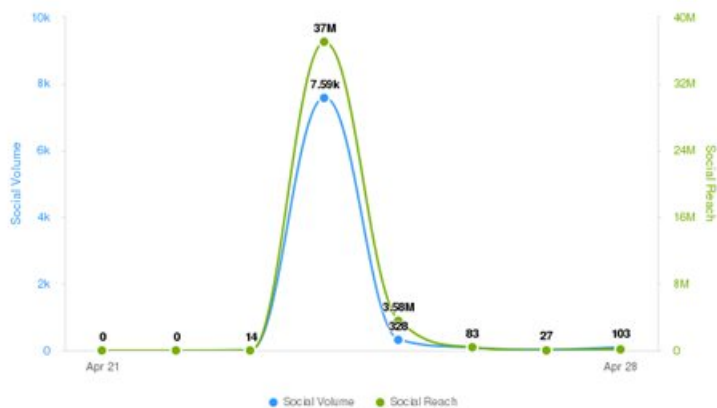
Social media sentiment analysis, in numbers, on #Ramaphosa during April 2020

[click to enlarge](#)

Nothing but respect for our president

Despite the mask mishap that Ramaphosa experienced, South Africans still showed respect within the humorous moment, as #CyrilFridays trended the day after his address to the nation. Just under 8,000 social media posts mentioned #CyrilFridays and the hashtag had a social reach of 36.4 million people on social media on 24 April 2020.

Social Reach vs. Social Volume



Social reach vs social volume of #CyrilFridays between 21 April and 28 April 2020 on social media

[click to enlarge](#)

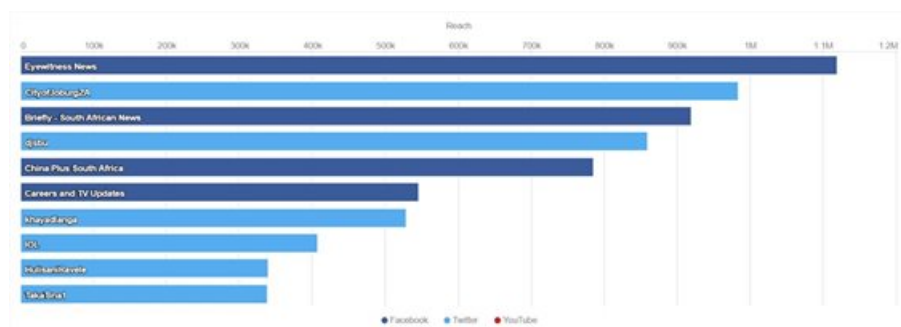
A number of South Africans, including prominent influencers, used the trending hashtag to show respect and kindness to Ramaphosa as a leader during the current global pandemic. At least 66% of social media posts that included #CyrilFridays spoke positively about Ramaphosa, thanking and praising him for his leadership in a time of uncertainty.

“Leadership is an action, not a position.” - Donald McGannon

Fellow South Africans, we are led. Thank you Mr President @CyrilRamaphosa. Thank you. #CyrilFridays pic.twitter.com/T74q48t40b— Hulisani Ravele (@HulisaniRavele) April 24, 2020

“Mr president, you have risen to the challenge during a difficult time. You have navigated a complex situation while uniting your people. There is still a long road to go and it's not going to get any easier. Because you have our backs, we have yours. #CyrilFridays— Khaya Dlanga (@khayadlanga) April 24, 2020

By reach, the top social media posters to mention and engage with #CyrilRamaphosa is 'Eyewitness News' and 'Briefly - South African News' on Facebook, and @CityofJoburgZA and @djsbu on Twitter.



Top posters, by reach, on social media for #CyrilFridays in April 2020

[click to enlarge](#)

In response to all the mask memes that circulated on social media, the humour was not lost in Ramaphosa, who addressed his viral moment in true South African style - by joining in on the jokes and poking light hearted fun at himself.

[ON-AIR] President Cyril Ramaphosa responds after his mask blunder goes viral. Courtesy #DStv403 pic.twitter.com/u9LK29q9wQ— eNCA (@eNCA) April 24, 2020

On Friday, some of the trending themes to emerge from #cyrilfridays on social media included 'best president' and

'leadership' referring to online users praising Ramaphosa's leadership skills throughout the current pandemic; 'long road', 'complex situation' and 'backs' referring to the high engagement received from influencer, [Khaya Dlanga's tweet](#); and 'position' and 'commitment' referring to users not taking the president's role lightly but acknowledging the commitment they see in him to ensure that South Africa overcomes the current crisis.

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