

SBC Monitoring Guidance

Social Media Analytics

What Are Social Media Analytics?

Social media refers to Internet-based technologies that facilitate connection and communication between users. Social media analytics is the practice of analyzing digital interactions on social media platforms using various forms of data. Widely used in the private sector, social media analytics are valuable tools for social and behavior change (SBC) programs with a social media presence.

Some social media analytic metrics, such as likes, tags, shares, and retweets, provide insights regarding engagement with certain content (e.g., links to a website or mobile application). Social media sentiment analysis metrics group together user actions, such as comments and engagement with content, and identify those actions as negative, neutral, or positive. If an SBC program uses social media, researchers can employ social media analytics to assess interest in specific topics and feed that analysis back into the social media campaign and larger SBC program design.

Many social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter, come with built-in analytic dashboards. Third-party software platforms are also used to monitor social media analytics; some are free and others require a paid subscription. The social media platform being used (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), as well as the metrics being measured, will influence which software is most appropriate. Some platforms (e.g., Sprout Social, Hootsuite) allow the customer to analyze activity within a demographic subgroup of platform users.

Once an analytics software is selected, the information gathered through that software must be interpreted. Program and monitoring staff must familiarize themselves with available metrics, interpret the analytics data, and consider its implications. For example, how do the results support, contradict, and expand on existing program information and how can this insight improve a digital product or SBC program?

When Should You Use Service Statistics?

Social media analytics can be used in many ways to help monitor social media campaigns that support larger SBC campaigns. This method should be used if a program employs social media as an engagement channel, either by creating social media page(s) dedicated to the program or through mentions in another organization's social media post. Social media analytics can be used to track an intended audience's opinion and needs in relation to a behavior or topic of interest. By collecting and analyzing comments from pages or posts, one can potentially gain insight into audience sentiment about an SBC program as well as whether the program objectives are being met.





STRENGTHS

- Quickly learn from past decisions and implement that learning quickly, sometimes mid-campaign.
- If free software platforms are used, they provide a low-cost method for tracking the progress of a program.
- Allows a program to segment its audience to better target their population of interest when using paid campaigns.
- Social media platforms provide rich meta-data on user demographics.



WEAKNESSES

- Some social media analytic software can be costly.
- Programs may require information technology support to link software platforms with their social media pages.
- Social media management know-how is needed to deal with filtering out spam and bots.

Ethical Considerations

Large social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have existing user agreements that address which data is being collected, how it is used, and how users can control their data. When reporting on the progress and monitoring of social media initiatives, consider anonymizing posts. If the campaign involves polling or surveying social media users, the use of such data should be explained in accessible and clear language depending on the sensitivity of the information shared.

Resources

[Introduction to Social Media Analytics](#)

A free, online course created by Emory University and hosted on Coursera that introduces analytic methods that can be utilized to convert social media data to marketing and programmatic insights.

[Social Media Analytics: Using Data to Understand Public Conversations](#)

A free, online course developed by Future Learn that demonstrates how to use digital analysis tools to understand dialogue on social media platforms, including Twitter.