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Social Media Metrics and Analytics

The use of social metrics and analytics may be referred to as ‘social listening’ (Hemann and Burbary, 2014:32). Social listening provides a revolutionary new way by which to study consumer behaviour as social media channels enable real-time collection of data of customer responses using cost-effective and non-intrusive techniques (Canhoto and Padmanabhan, 2015). There are different tools that are used to gather data from the wide and growing range of social media channels. For example, Facebook offers a free analytics platform that enables page owners to view metrics on community activity and content performance. The increase in brand-related social media activity has resulted in both start-ups and established media monitoring companies developing a bewildering array of specialist software (Hemann and Burbary, 2014).

Social media metrics and analytics assess the influence of social media activities on the relationship between the brand and the consumer (Barker et al., 2013). Online consumer engagement (OCE) refers to online behaviour that goes beyond purchase to result in involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Haven and Vittal, 2008). Social Impact theory explains how interaction between individuals influences behaviour and states that the degree of impact of a message is associated with the number of sources exerting influence, the immediacy of the message and the strength of the source (status and other characteristics) (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). To aid clarity it is helpful to identify social metrics that measure involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence, and to consider the role of immediacy, strength and numbers.

Involvement

Involvement metrics measure the presence of the customer at the brand touch point, e.g. the social media fan page (Chan-Olmsted and Shay, 2015). Key metrics are: impressions, followers/subscribers and likes. Reach metrics quantify how many people have viewed (have been reached) by the social media content, and this measure is equivalent to the circulation statistics of printed media. Reach can be measured as being owned, paid or earned reach (Hemann and Burbray, 2014). *Owned* reach relates to the number of people who view the post on the brand page itself. *Paid* reach relates to the numbers who view the post as part of a sponsored story or as an advertisement placed within their social media feed. *Earned* reach refers to the number of people who view a post as a result of it being shared by a friend.

Impression metrics focus upon the content as unit of measurement to count the number of times a person has viewed content or had the opportunity to view content without liking, and is the simplest indicator of presence. Follower/subscribers and likes are metrics that focus upon the individual as a unit of measurement – you cannot double ‘like’ content. When an individual likes a social media page then they have viewed content; in contrast, following/subscribing is a page level metric that results in their ongoing presence at the brand touch point and content being posted into the individual’s own online presence or them being alerted when new content arrives. A commercial survey undertaken by comScore and Facebook indicates that individuals who liked the “Starbuck’s Facebook page or who had a Facebook friend who had liked the page spent 8% more and transacted 11% more frequently over the course of a month” (John et al., 2017:110). However, this may be a case of correlation not causation; those who like a page might already be positively disposed towards the brand which would explain why they would purchase more than non-followers.

Involvement metrics form the basis of conversation reach, and topic trend analytics (Table 10.1). Conversation reach identifies how many brand followers are participating in a specific brand conversation across one or more social media channels (Barker et al., 2012). Conversation reach is a useful measure of content effectiveness, which is known as *message resonance*. One challenge in calculating conversation metrics is how to identify and delimit the scope of the conversation. In some media it is relatively easy to delimit the conversation, e.g. the Twitter hashtag can be used. Topic trend analytics calculate the percentage contribution of an individual topic to the number of all topic

mentions and thus contextualise a particular topic within the ongoing stream of topic mentions. For example, a digital marketing manager might track the Halloween ideas as a percentage of all mentions relating to brand use.

Involvement analytics should be evaluated longitudinally across time in order to have a benchmark against which to compare current statistics. This allows a brand to identify when a conversation is expanding and travelling beyond the normal audience, i.e. going viral. Once a trend is spotted then digital marketers can choose to allocate more or fewer resources to developing the conversation, for example by focusing on fostering dialogue within the more active channels and by ensuring that the sentiment within the conversation remains positive.

Table 10.1: Involvement analytics

Analytic	Calculation
Conversation reach	Total people participating/ total audience exposure
Topic trends	Number of specific topic mentions/ all topic mentions

Interaction

Interaction metrics measures how an individual read, likes or share content at each brand touch point (Chan-Olmsted and Shay, 2015) (Table 10.2). Interaction moves beyond passive liking or following and relates to metrics of comments, retweets, and replies. When an individual makes a comment they offer an opinion on the post that they are viewing. Comments can be directly on the post or replies to comments on that post. Channels such as Facebook, YouTube and Slideshare show the comments and replies in a common thread whereas others, e.g. Twitter, do not link comments in this way. Retweets are specific to Twitter and are when an individual shares content with their followers. Interaction metrics are used to calculate analytics such as audience engagement and share of voice, as well issue resolution time and response rates.

Table 10.2: Interaction analytics

Analytic	Calculation
Audience engagement	Total comments+ Shares+ Trackbacks/ Total views
Share of voice	Number of brand mentions/ Total mentions of competitors
Issue resolution time	Total no. of issues resolved satisfactorily/ Total no. of service issues
Issue response rate	Total issue response time/ Total no. of service issues