

A new framework for measuring social media

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5 Nov 2015

With 1.44 billion Facebook users, 307 million Twitter users and over 1 billion monthly Youtube users, social media has become the most engaging media format used by consumers worldwide.



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People spend more time in apps than they do watching television, and social media sites are second only to search engines in terms of global internet usage.

A full 90% of all the data in the world has been generated over the last two years, and is created at an ever-increasing rate. Much of this data comes in the form of personal information and social media messaging - the billions of images, messages, and videos created around the world that represent the collective consciousness of humanity.

Perhaps because of social media's volume, velocity and variety of data, the measurement and analysis of social media by organisations has long lacked robustness, consistency and industry-wide adoption. This also resonates in a South African context, where agencies and even media monitoring companies all measure the medium in different ways with different outcomes.

This lack of standardisation leads to several problems. A lack of measurement consistency among media monitoring companies creates conflicting results and confusion among clients that switch providers, leading to reduced investment in

social media and analytics in general. As they say, you can't manage what you can't measure, and if the measurement is inconsistent across industries, companies and campaigns, nothing can be consistently benchmarked, compared and optimised accordingly.

Despite the numerous challenges involved with measuring social media accurately, effectively and consistently, it is still possible to provide a standardised measurement framework with best practices and metric recommendations. IAB South Africa is preparing the release of a white paper to industry that presents a framework for measuring social media across use cases, including processes, metrics and definitions.

The white paper presents the results from an industry collaboration between South African media measurement organisations, for the purpose of establishing a set of guidelines that can be used to standardise social media measurement throughout the industry. The metrics and methods proposed are endorsed by the top local media monitoring providers, some of which include Ornico Group, Brandseye, Newsclip, Fuseware, AmaSocial, as well as support from media intelligence firms such as Millward Brown, Telmar and Kwanda. The white paper intends to provide a way forward for brands to better understand the key metrics they need to keep track of, as well as the metrics that social media monitoring platforms need to implement to remain consistent with industry best practices.

The framework and metrics are originally inspired from the global AMEC media measurement guidelines for social media, so as to align with globally accepted best practices. The AMEC guidelines were identified as being too complex for many local use cases, so the methodologies were simplified and adjusted to better suit the local market in which South African businesses operate.

The core of the document is a selection of 34 of the most important social media metrics that relate to social media use cases across PR, reputational measurement, marketing effectiveness and customer service measurement. The specific metrics chosen have been carefully selected to span across the categories of exposure, engagement and outcomes in the customer journey on social media, including social networks but also blogs and bespoke social portals.

- **Exposure** relates to direct social media outputs that represent the first step in the funnel
- **Engagement** represents the interactions and responses generated from the previous exposure
- **Outcomes** represent the business outcomes that are created from engagement

Metrics range widely from standard exposure metrics such as reach and frequency, to more comprehensive metrics such as audience applause rate, amplification rate, conversation rate and business response times and rates. While the use cases of social media vary widely, this document provides a best practice fit for the most common use cases, and how best to track and measure success.

The social media measurement guidelines are being released to industry in the near future, and will be discussed extensively by the country's top marketing minds at the Social Media Guidelines event on 26 November in Johannesburg. To book your ticket to this groundbreaking event, [click here](#).

ABOUT MICHAL WRONSKI

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