

## **Social Media**

Social media is a digital technology using which people can interact with each other by creating, sharing, and/or exchanging information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social data is defined as publicly available information shared by social media users, like their location, language, and content shared.

From Facebook and Instagram to X platform (formerly Twitter) and YouTube, more than 4.7 billion people use social media, equal to roughly 60% of the world's population. The largest social media platforms worldwide are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat. It is an ever-changing field, with relatively recent apps such as TikTok, Signal, and Clubhouse joining the ranks of established social networks like Facebook, YouTube, X platform, and Instagram.

## **The Top 10 Social Media Platforms Worldwide**

1. Facebook (2.96 billion users)
2. YouTube (2.51 billion users)
3. WhatsApp (2 billion users)
4. Instagram (2 billion users)
5. WeChat (1.31 billion users)
6. TikTok (1.05 billion users)
7. Facebook Messenger (931 million users)
8. Douyin (715 million users)
9. Telegram (700 million users)
10. Snapchat (635 million users)

Interestingly, two that are especially well-known in the U.S.—X platform (Twitter) and Pinterest—didn't make the top 10 list globally. X platform was 14th, with 556 million users worldwide, while Pinterest was 15th with 445 million.

Globally, the most popular social media site is Facebook, with close to 3 billion users, according to one recent estimate.

## **How 'Social Media' Originated and Evolved?**

Social media started out as a way for people to interact with friends and family but soon expanded to serve many different purposes. In 2004, MySpace was the first network to reach 1 million monthly active users. Social media participation exploded in the years that followed with the entry of Facebook and Twitter (now X platform). Businesses gravitated toward these platforms in order to reach an audience instantly on a global scale. According to Global Web Index, 46% of internet users worldwide get their news through social media. That compares to 40% of users who view news on news websites.

## **Core/Key Characteristics of Social-Media**

Several characteristics make social media a unique communication tool. To be characterized as 'Social Media', a website should have the following key/core characteristics:

### **Web space and Web Address:**

The website should provide the users free web space to upload content. The users are given a unique web address that becomes their web identity. They can post and share all their content on this web address.

### **Build Profiles**

Users are asked to enter personal details like name, address, date of birth, school/college education, professional details etc. The site then mines the personal data to connect individuals.

### **Posts have time stamp**

All posts are time stamped, making it easy to follow posts.

### **Connect with Friends**

Users are encouraged to post personal and professional updates about themselves. The site then becomes a platform to connect friends and relatives.

### **Enable Conversations/Communication**

Members are given the rights to comment on posts made by friends and relatives. Conversations

are a great social connect. Media facilitates communication between individuals, communities, and institutions.

### **Upload Content in Real Time**

Users are provided the tools to post content in real time. This content can be text, images, audio, video or even symbolic likes and dislikes. The last post comes first, giving the site freshness.

### **General Information Transmission:**

Media swiftly and effectively conveys information and news from sources to the public.

### **Education and Culture:**

Media offers educational and cultural programs for audiences.

### **Entertainment:**

Media provides entertaining content like TV shows, movies, and cartoons in newspapers. Content needs to catch a user's attention.

### **Advertising and Marketing:**

Media is used for promoting products and services.

### **Aspirational**

Aspiration = ambition and Inspiration - Motivation

It's important to differentiate between Inspirational and Aspirational. Aspiration refers to ambition whereas inspiration refers to the urge to do something. Aspiration motivates an individual to achieve a goal in the future, while inspiration is the trigger for aspirations. Providing the audience with that initial inspiration as well as the long-term aspirations to back it up is how to grow an engaged community.

### **Actionable**

Providing actionable content is key. For most brands, this can simply be updates on new products, sales, maintenance recommendations, or curated accessory suggestions. Social media should provide facility for conversations with the customers and allow them to voice their opinions or review.

### **Joinable**

Brand loyalty in today's world is based on people feeling like they are participating in a community rather than yelling into the void. Whether it's through events and causes, or a shared mission, or simply a hashtag that consumers can identify with, creating a feeling of belonging and community is key.

### **Ease:**

It should catch the user's attention. It should be interesting to look at. It should be easy to digest and easy at operational level.

### **Reliability/Truthfulness and Integrity:**

News should be free from falsehood and manipulation. Information sources should be trustworthy.

### **Content Creators**

Social media users are content creators. People can create their own blogs, write a Facebook or Twitter post expressing their thoughts on an issue, or post a video blog ("vlog") about their latest travel adventures on YouTube. This enables users to be active participants in the communication process.

### **Pay**

### **Off**

Whether it's promotions, giveaways, or freebies, consumers want an incentive above and beyond the prior points to let a brand occupy the real estate on their social feeds and in their inbox. It takes time and attention to follow a brand, even passively, and brands need to offer something in exchange for that.

### **Conclusion and Analysis:**

Media provides insight and analysis on current events, wars, conflicts, and social and economic issues.

### **Freedom of the Press:**

Media operates under the fundamental value of freedom of the press, allowing journalists to provide information impartially and freely.

### **Shaping Public Opinion/Social Impact:**

Media influences public opinions and trends by presenting and analyzing information. Media can shape the culture and ideas of society through the content it delivers. Media characteristics evolve

continually with technological advancements and changes in audience habits, making it a subject of ongoing study and development for writers and innovators.

## **Important Social Media Skills**

### **Excellent Communication**

The first social media skill we must have is - communication. If we want to represent an organization and engage with their customers, then we need to have strong communication skills. It is required for getting along with colleagues, putting the ideas and campaigns into words, and to be the voice of the brand on a global stage!

### **Writing Ability**

Although images and videos dominate much of social media skills, writing also plays a critical role. If headlines aren't magnetic or captivating enough, it's likely people are not going to be motivated enough to click.

### **Creativity**

One of the most important attributes of social media marketing skills is creativity. Social media users tend to unfollow a brand if the content shared is repetitive or boring. To keep followers engaged and hooked, social media marketers need to consistently come up with new and engaging ideas, creative initiatives, and campaigns.

### **Marketing**

Social media marketing is the use of social networks as a sales and marketing tool. Social media marketing has opened up opportunities for local businesses to reach out to potential customers. We need a solid understanding of basic marketing principles and how marketing works.

### **Community Management**

Community, a must-have social media skill! Social media marketing requires building connections and an online community to succeed.

### **Branding**

The next essential social media marketing skill is branding. Creating and maintaining a strong brand identity on social media is essential for differentiating your brand from the competition.

### **Strategic Thinking**

Successful social media marketing requires strategy.

### **Relationship Building**

Social media marketers also need to reach out to influencers and that makes relationship building a crucial skill to develop.

### **Flexibility**

Change is constant in social media, and the best social media marketers are those who can quickly adapt to a new situation or respond to something that is happening in the social media environment, whether good or bad.

### **Content Curation**

Content curation is the act or process of selecting and organizing the contents (something, such as articles or images) for distribution or publication. It is the act of finding and sharing excellent, relevant content.

### **Project Management**

Social media marketers need good project management skills. They need to create publishing schedules, track contacts, and maintain social media profiles. They are required to run reports, meet with designers and writers, manage ad budgets, and much more. With strong project management skills, the best social media managers will stay on top of all tasks as well as knows when content needs to be published, what to plan for, and how to keep track of all the different social media conversations going on.

### **Social Media Listening**

The ability to listen to and respond to conversations about your brand on social media is essential for building relationships with customers and prospects.

### **Analytical Skills**

At the end of the day, we need to know if our marketing is working. And that's why analytical skill is one of the most important and advantageous social media skill. We can learn how to check metrics

and reporting, but having an analytical mind will help us make sense of all that data—so we can make informed decisions instead of relying on assumptions.

### **Aptitude to Learn**

As we know technology changes constantly and new social media platforms appear while and new features are regularly added to the existing platforms. In addition to that flux, consumer expectations can change on a whim as well. A good social media marketer willingly learns on-the-fly as needed.

### **Ethics**

Social media marketers need to be aware of the ethical implications of their work, such as the use of personal data and the spread of misinformation.

### **Pros and Cons of Social Media (Advantages (Importance) / Disadvantages)**

With the prevalence of social media: “News of a great product can spread like wildfire. And news about a bad product or a bad experience with a customer service can spread just as quickly. Consumers are now holding organizations to account for their brand promises and sharing their experiences with friends, co-workers and the public at large.”

#### **Pros**

**Community and friends:** Social media is credited with helping people build community and friends.

**Real Time Access:** Social media platforms allow people to access information in real time, to connect with others, and to find niche (suitable) communities. It makes the world more interconnected. Social media allows people to feel more connected to their peers.

**Achieve Goals:** Data keeps us on track to achieve our social media goals, proving what's working and what's not.

**Improve strategic Decision Making:** Social media analytics can improve a marketing team's ability to understand what social media strategies are working and which ones aren't as effective. It can also provide demographic information about the audience that will enable enhanced marketing efforts targeting that sector and more effectively create brand awareness.

**Track the efficiency of Marketing Teams:** Most organizations strive to streamline workflows and enable team members to be more productive. It has the ability to improve efficiency of the marketing team. Showing the chief marketing officer areas where workflows can be automated and resources can be redirected to strategic activities that directly impact revenue are key to obtaining marketing budget and approvals for future campaigns.

**Customer Sentiment:** It can also help to gauge customer sentiment, spot trends, and avoid PR crises before they happen. It provides a clearer picture of customer pain points, shifting needs and desired features. Trends can be identified and tracked to shape the existing product lines as well as guide new product development and can influence the success of marketing efforts. Natural language processing and sentiment analysis can continually monitor positive or negative expectations to maintain brand health, refine positioning and develop new brand attributes. By looking through your social media analytics, we can review and measure our brand sentiment through sentiment analysis. This helps ensure our audience is happy with our business and enables us to detect opportunities to make amends with unsatisfied customers.

**Understanding Competitors:** Understanding what competitors are doing/saying and how customers are responding is always critical.

**Operational Efficiency:** Deep analysis of social media can help organizations improve how they gauge demand. Retailers and others can use that information to manage inventory and suppliers, reduce costs and optimize resources.

#### **Cons**

**Misinformation:** Social media is also very good at spreading disinformation and hate speech.

**Polarization:** Creating polarization. Creating divisions within society. Algorithms on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube tend to show users content that aligns with their existing beliefs and interests. This leads to "echo chambers" where individuals only hear viewpoints that reinforce their own, and "filter bubbles" where they are less likely to encounter opposing perspectives. Over time, this can entrench people's views, making them more resistant to differing opinions.

**Overuse:** Many teens overuse social media. It is not good for their physical and mental health as it is "distracting them, disrupting their sleep, and exposing them to bullying, rumor spreading.

**Harmful Psychological Effects / Unrealistic Views and Peer Pressure:** Unrealistic views of other people's lives, and peer pressure. People often post highlights of their lives, which can create a distorted perception of reality. This selective sharing—usually the most glamorous or exciting moments—can make others feel like their own lives are lacking in comparison. The widespread use of filters and photo-editing tools can create unrealistic standards of beauty, perfection, and success. This can lead to body image issues, low self-esteem, and dissatisfaction with one's own life. Constant comparison to others curated and often inflated lives can foster feelings of jealousy, anxiety, or failure. People may feel pressured to keep up with others, even though what they see may not reflect the reality of those lives.

### **Social Media Analytics**

Social media analytics is the process of collecting and analyzing audience data shared on social networks to improve an organization's strategic business decisions. Social media analytics includes the concept of social listening. Listening is monitoring social channels for problems and opportunities.

**In Social Media Analytics the answers to the following questions are derived:**

How can social media be used to promote brand awareness?

How active is social media in a business and how many people are connected with the company?

What are customers saying about a brand or product on social media?

Is social media conversation about a company, product, or service positive, negative, or neutral?

How can social media data be used to improve products or services?

Which social media platforms are driving the most traffic to a corporate website?

Where are the social media customers located geographically?

How are competitors performing on social media?

Which content posted on social media is resonating (positive feeling/emotional response or opinion) more with customers?

Who are the influential nodes (people, organizations, followers, fans, and friends) on social media and their position in the network?

Which keywords and terms are trending on social media?

### **How to Conduct a Social Media Analysis?**

Conducting a social media analysis involves evaluating and assessing social media channels to understand performance, engagement, audience behavior, and trends.

#### **Define Goals and Objectives**

Before we begin our analysis, it's crucial to establish what we want to achieve. These objectives will guide our analysis. Some common goals include:

**Brand Awareness:** Track mentions, reach, and impressions.

**Engagement:** Measure likes, shares, comments, and other forms of interaction.

**Lead Generation:** Analyze conversions, clicks, and sign-ups.

**Audience Growth:** Evaluate follower growth rates.

**Content Performance:** Identify which types of content resonate most with your audience.

#### **Identify Key Metrics**

These can be broken into two categories: quantitative and qualitative.

##### **Quantitative Metrics:**

**Engagement Rate:** Likes, comments, shares, and other interactions relative to the number of followers.

**Impressions and Reach:** The number of times your content is seen (impressions) and the number of unique users who saw it (reach).

**Follower Growth:** The increase or decrease in the number of followers.

**Click-Through Rate (CTR):** The percentage of people who clicked on a link in your post.

**Conversion Rate:** How many users took the desired action, like signing up for a newsletter or making a purchase.

**Sentiment Analysis:** Determine whether mentions are positive, negative, or neutral.

**Qualitative Metrics:**

**Content Quality:** Analyze the tone, visuals, and messaging.

**Audience Feedback:** Review comments and direct messages for feedback.

**Competitor Analysis:** Compare your performance to similar brands

### **Gather Data / Identify the Tools to Gather Data.**

Collect data from various platforms. Most social media platforms offer native analytics tools. Here are some key tools for each platform:

**Facebook:** Facebook Insights. **Instagram:** Instagram Insights (for Business/Creator accounts)

**Twitter:** Twitter Analytics. **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn Analytics. **YouTube:** YouTube Studio

**TikTok:** TikTok Analytics (for Pro accounts)

We can also use third-party tools that consolidate analytics from multiple platforms, such as:

**Google Analytics** (for tracking social media traffic to your website), **Hootsuite**, **Sprout Social**, **Socialbakers**, **BuzzSumo**, **SEMrush** (for content performance)

### **Analyze Content Performance**

Examine the performance of our individual posts, stories, and videos. Look for patterns:

**Best Times to Post:** Identify when our audience is most active.

**Top Performing Content:** What types of content (e.g., images, videos, carousels, text posts) generate the most engagement?

**Hashtags:** What hashtags are driving traffic and engagement?

### **Conduct Competitor Benchmarking**

Analyzing our competitors helps us understand where we stand in comparison. Look at their content strategy, engagement rates, and audience behavior. Some key areas to assess include:

How often are they posting? What types of content do they focus on? How are they engaging with their audience? What is their overall sentiment? What are their follower growth trends?

### **Assess Audience Demographics**

Understand the demographic breakdown of your audience. Key metrics to explore are Age, Gender, Location, Interests (based on engagement and profile info), Device Usage (mobile, desktop)

This information can help us refine our content strategy and tailor posts to the right audience segments.

### **Sentiment Analysis**

Evaluate the tone of the comments, mentions, and overall feedback to gauge sentiment around your brand. This could be done manually or by using sentiment analysis tools. Positive sentiment suggests your brand message resonates well, while negative sentiment may highlight issues that need addressing.

### **Identify Trends and Insights**

Look for emerging trends in your data.

For example: Are there specific topics your audience is engaging with more? Are certain keywords or hashtags gaining traction? Are there any shifts in the time of day your audience is most active? Has there been a noticeable change in engagement after certain campaigns or content types?

These insights can help us refine our strategy and plan for future posts.

### **Make Data-Driven Decisions**

Use the insights from our analysis to make informed decisions.

This could involve: Tweaking our content strategy based on performance insights; Engaging with our audience more effectively (e.g., responding to comments, addressing concerns); Adjusting our posting schedule; Testing new types of content or experimenting with ads.

## **Seven Layers of Social Media Analytics**

Social media has a minimum seven layers of data. Each layer carries potentially valuable information and insights that can be harvested for business intelligence purposes. Out of the seven layers, some are visible or easily identifiable (e.g., text and actions) and others are invisible (e.g., social media and hyperlink networks).

The following are seven social media layers:

1. Text Analytics
2. Networks Analytics
3. Actions Analytics
4. Hyperlinks Analytics
5. Mobile Analytics
6. Location Analytics
7. Search engines Analytics

### **Text Analytics:**

Social media text analytics deals with the extraction and analysis of business insights from textual elements of social media content, such as comments, tweets, blog posts, and Facebook status updates. It is used to understand user sentiments and identify emerging themes and topics.

### **Networks Analytics:**

Social media network analytics extract, analyze, and interprets the connections between users and the relationships between them, such as followers and friends on social media. It is used to identify influential nodes (people and organizations) and their position in the network.

### **Actions Analytics:**

Social media actions analytics deals with extracting, analyzing, and interpreting the actions performed by social media users, including likes, dislikes, shares, mentions, and endorsement. It is used to measure popularity, influence, and prediction in social media. Social media actions (e.g., Twitter mentions) can be used for business intelligence purposes.

### **Hyperlinks Analytics:**

Hyperlinks are references to Web resources that users can access by clicking on them.

Hyperlink analytics is about extracting, analyzing, and interpreting social media hyperlinks (e.g., in-links and out-links). This includes the links between social media posts and other websites, as well as the content of those linked websites. It is used to reveal Internet traffic patterns and sources of incoming or outgoing traffic.

### **Mobile Analytics:**

This includes data related to the use of social media on mobile devices, such as the type of device used, the operating system, and the location of the user. It is used to measure and optimize user engagement with mobile applications.

### **Location/ Spatial analytics / Geospatial Analytics,:**

This includes data on the geographical location of users and the location-specific content they engage with on social media. It is used to mine and map the locations of social media users, content, and data.

### **Search Engines Analytics:**

It includes data on how users find and access social media content through search engines, as well as the keywords they use in their searches. It is used to analyze historical search data for trends analysis, keyword monitoring, and advertisement history.

## **Social Media Analytics Types**

### **Descriptive Analytics:**

This involves gathering and describing social media data in the form of reports, visualizations, and clustering to understand a business problem. Examples include actions analytics (e.g., number of likes, tweets, and views) and text analytics. Descriptive analytics answer the question “what is happening”? “What happened”? These types of analytics cluster similar types of data together in order to produce a cohesive view. Comments and posts can be grouped together, for instance, for the purpose of sentiment analysis

### **Diagnostic Analytics:**

Diagnostic analysis focuses on the numbers: like counts, follower numbers, pageviews, reviews, shares. This type of analytics focuses on the performance of posts and campaigns and attempts to discern what made them successful. Both diagnostic and descriptive analytics are reactive – that is, they are concerned with events that have already happened.

### **Predictive Analytics:**

This involves analyzing large amounts of accumulated social media data to predict a future event. For example, analyzing social media posts to predict future purchasing behavior or using historical website visits to predict future sales figures. Both predictive and prescriptive analytics are proactive – as in, they attempt to predict trends, events, and shifts based on existing data. It can range from simple things, like predicting possible visits to a location based upon posts expressing that intention, to forecasting upcoming trends, and shifts in consumer behavior and phenomena based upon mentions.

### **Prescriptive analytics:**

This involves suggesting the best action to take when handling a scenario based on analyzing patterns of behavior. Prescriptive analysis is the analysis of data with the intention of providing the best way to proceed at any given moment. This can be applied to situations ranging from handling social media crises and incidents (“how well does this type of apology track with our target audience?”) to purchase preferences (“we’ve identified this group of customers – how do we optimize our sales process to their habits?”). Although it’s an incredibly useful form of analysis, it requires a lot of data in order to truly show its potential.

## **Social Media Analytics Lifecycle**

The social media analytics process involves six steps to mine desired business insights from social media data. The process begins with defining business goals and objectives and continues until these objectives are fully satisfied.

### **The six general steps are:**

#### **Step1 – Identification**

The identification stage of social media analytics involves finding the right sources of data to analyze in order to gain valuable business insights. The data should be aligned with the business's objectives and can come from both official business-owned platforms, such as social media accounts and blogs, and nonofficial platforms such as Google search trends or Twitter search stream data.

It is important to consider the business objectives when identifying the sources and types of data to be analyzed.

#### **Step2 – Extraction**

The extraction stage of social media analytics involves using appropriate methods and tools to gather data from identified sources. This can include manual data collection for small-scale data and automated extraction using APIs (application programming interfaces) for larger data sets.

Specialized tools may be needed to extract certain types of data, such as social network and hyperlink network data. It is important to consider privacy and ethical issues when mining data from social media platforms and to have a clear social media privacy policy in place to ensure that data handling and extraction practices do not violate user privacy.

#### **Step3 – Cleaning**

The cleaning step in social media analytics involves removing unwanted data from the collected data set. This can involve processes such as coding, filtering, clustering, and natural language processing to remove irrelevant data. Both automated and manual techniques may be used for cleaning, depending on the type of data and the desired level of accuracy.

#### **Step 4- Analyzing**

The analyzing stage of social media analytics involves using clean data to identify valuable insights for the business. The approach and techniques used depends on the type of data being analyzed and the tools and algorithms employed. It is important to maintain the integrity of the data while extracting meaningful insights and to have a good understanding of the capabilities of the tools being used.

#### **Step 5 – Visualization**

The visualization step in social media analytics involves creating visual representations of the results of the analysis. Effective visualization is important for effectively communicating the results of the



analysis to top management. Visualization can help reveal hidden patterns, relationships, and trends in complex and large data sets. Different types of data will result in different types of visualizations, including network data, topical data, temporal data, and geospatial data. Types of visualizations may also include trees, hierarchical graphs, and heat maps.

### **Step 6 - Interpretation**

Interpret and translate analytics results into a meaningful business problem. Two strategies or approaches used are:

- 1) Producing easily consumable analytical results and
- 2) Improving analytics consumption capabilities

### **Social Media Analytics Vs Traditional Business Analytics:**

The main function of a business analysis is to assess how a business is performing as a whole.

The main difference between social media analytics and traditional business analytics is the source, type, and nature of the data being mined.

Traditional business analysis refers to writing the requirements document to serve as the foundation for the system development effort. The requirements document is usually completed, or mostly completed, before construction begins.

Social media analytics involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of semi-structured and unstructured social media data, while traditional business analytics uses structured and historical data.

Social media data is diverse, high volume, real-time, and stored in third-party databases in semi-structured and unstructured formats, while traditional business data is mostly stored in databases and spreadsheets in machine-readable format.

Social media data is socialized in nature and originates from the public internet, while traditional business data is bureaucratic and formal in nature and is controlled by organizations.

The value of social media data is determined by the extent to which it is shared with other social entities, while the value of traditional business data is often confined within organizational databases and serves as a source of competitive advantage.

Wide Audience Reach: SMA offers a global reach, allowing businesses to tap into a vast and diverse audience that spans across geographical boundaries. In contrast, TBA often has limited reach and might struggle to connect with a broader demographic.

Cost-Effective Strategy: SMA is known for its cost-effectiveness. With minimal budgets, businesses can create impactful campaigns and engage with potential customers on multiple platforms. TBA, on the other hand, can be expensive, limiting the opportunities for smaller businesses.

Real-time Engagement: SMA enables direct and real-time engagement with customers. The ability to respond promptly to inquiries, comments, and feedback fosters a sense of authenticity and customer trust. TBA lacks this immediacy and personal touch.

Content Versatility: SMA thrives on content diversity. From visuals and videos to interactive posts and stories, businesses can experiment with various formats to engage their audience. TBA often relies on static advertisements, limiting creativity.

Data-Driven Insights: SMA provides robust analytics tools that offer precise insights into user behavior, content performance, and demographics. These insights empower businesses to fine-tune their strategies for optimal results. TBA lacks this level of detailed analysis.

Amplifying Reach: Perhaps the most significant difference lies in the viral potential of SMA. Engaging and shareable content has the power to go viral on social media, multiplying brand exposure in ways TBA can't replicate easily.

<b>Social Media Analytics</b>	<b>Business Analytics</b>
Semistructured and unstructured data	Structured data
Data is not analytical friendly	Data is analytical friendly
Real-time data	Mostly historical data
Public data	Private data
Stored in third-party databases	Stored in business-owned databases
Boundary-less data (i.e., Boundary within the Internet)	Bound within the business intranet

### **What metrics should be tracked with social media analytics?**

There are six general types of social media metrics that should be tracked.

#### **Performance Metrics**

Measuring the performance of social media marketing efforts is critical to understanding where strategic efforts are working and where improvement is needed.

Key performance metrics to track include the following:

Interactions across platforms and over time to determine if the posted content is properly engaging the audience. Whether the number of followers is increasing over time to verify consistent progress across platforms and Click-through rate for link clicks on posts to see if they're properly driving traffic from social media channels.

#### **Audience Analytics**

It's important to clearly understand and define the target audience, as it is the most important element of a social media strategy. Understanding the audience helps what customers want and what they're looking for. In the past, audience data was difficult to measure as it was scattered across multiple social media platforms. But with analytic tools, marketers can analyze data across platforms to better understand audience demographics, interests and behaviors. AI-enabled tools can even help predict customer behavior. They can also study how an audience changes over time. The better targeted the content is, the less advertising will cost and the cost-per-click of ads can be optimized.

#### **Competitor Analytics**

To obtain a full understanding of performance metrics, it's necessary to look at the metrics through a competitive lens. In other words, how do they stack up to competitors' performance? With social media analytics tools, social media performance can be compared to competitors' performance with a head-to-head analysis to gauge relative effectiveness and to determine what can be improved. Most modern tools that include AI capabilities can benchmark competitor performance by industry to determine a good starting point for social media efforts.

#### **Paid Social Analytics**

Ad spending is serious business. If targeting and content isn't right, it can end up an expensive proposition for unsuccessful content. More advanced analytics tools can often predict which content is most likely to perform well and be a less risky investment for a marketing budget.

For best results, an all-in-one platform is the preferred choice to track performance across all social media accounts such as Twitter analytics, paid Facebook posts or LinkedIn ads. Important metrics to track include the following:

Total number of active ads, Total ad spend, Total clicks, Click-through rate, Cost per click, Cost per engagement, Cost per action, Cost per purchase

These metrics will indicate exactly where each dollar spent is going and how much return is being generated for social media efforts. They can also be compared against competitor spending to ensure that spending is at an appropriate level and to reveal strategic opportunities where an increased share of voice may be attainable.

#### **Influencer Analytics**

To gain a leg up on competition in a competitive space, many social media marketers collaborate with social influencers as part of their marketing campaigns. To make the most of partnerships, it's necessary to measure key metrics to ensure that the Influencer marketing is achieving desired goals.

Social media analytics can provide insights into the right metrics to ensure that influencer campaigns are successful.

Some influencer metrics that should be tracked include the following:

Total interactions per 1,000 followers to understand if they're properly generating engagement, Audience size and most frequently used hashtags, to help determine the maximum reach of the campaign,

The number of posts influencers create on a regular basis, to help determine how active they are and

How powerful engagement can be and past collaborations, which can be a great indicator of the potential for success with an influencer.

### **Sentiment Analysis**

Sentiment analysis is an important metric to measure as it can indicate whether a campaign is gaining favorability with an audience or losing it. And for customer service-oriented businesses, sentiment analysis can reveal potential customer care issues. To ensure that a campaign is in sync with the target audience and maintains a strong rate of growth, interactions and engagement rate should be tracked over time. A decline could indicate that a change of course is needed. This type of analysis can also indicate the type of content that's likely to have a positive impact on customer sentiment. If your social media analytics tool detects a spike in negative sentiment, action should be taken immediately to address and correct it before it becomes a PR nightmare.

### **Social Media Analytics Tools / Network Analytic Software Tools**

Social media analytics is the process of collecting and analyzing audience data shared on social networks. Social media analytics tools help us do all this, while also creating performance reports to figure out what's working and what's not. A large list of software packages and libraries can be found under Computer Programs for Social Network Analysis.

Social media analytics uses specifically designed software platforms that work similar to web search tools. Data about keywords or topics is retrieved through search queries or web 'crawlers' that span channels. Fragments of text are returned, loaded into a database, categorized and analyzed to derive meaningful insights. To track social media analytics, we need to look at likes, comments, shares and saves, but we might also monitor mentions and discussion of our brand or consumer insights by practicing social listening.

### **Examples of Social Media Analytics Tools:**

Sprout Social, Google Analytics, Hootsuite and Buffer Analyze.

Social network tools for scholarly work:

standard UCINET, Pajek, ORA, or the "network" package in "R").

They are relatively easy to use to present graphical images of networks.

Business oriented software: is also available.

InFlow, NetMiner.

An open source package for linux is Social Networks Visualizer or SocNetV; a related package installer of SocNetV for Mac OS X is available.

Using Google Analytics for social media tracking is really the best way to see how many visits you're getting from social media, plus what those visitors are doing on your site once they arrive.

Layer of social media	Example of tools
Text	Discovertext, Lexalytics, Twitonomy, Netlytic, LIWC, Voyant
Actions	Lithium, Twitonomy, Google Analytics, SocialMediaMineR
Network	NodeXL, UCINET, Pajek, Netminer, Flocker, Netlytic, Reach, Mentionmapp

### **Demand for Social Media Analytics**

The Global Social Media Analytics market is anticipated to rise at a considerable rate during the forecast period, between 2023 and 2030. In 2022, the market is growing at a steady rate and with the rising adoption of strategies by key players.

Social media is booming in the business industry with 85% of companies using various social platforms for top-funnel purposes such as exposure and product awareness.

The major factors driving the social media analytics market growth are the rising number of social media users, increased focus on the market and competitive intelligence rising need for social media measurement to enhance the customer experience.

### **Challenges of Social Media Analytics**

A key challenge in social media analytics is data quality. Social media data can be noisy, incomplete, or inaccurate due to factors like spam, bots, trolls, fake accounts, duplicate posts, or measurement errors. These can lead to misleading insights.

**Volume and Velocity** is a challenge

**Diversity Challenge-** Social media users and content they generate are extremely diverse, multilingual, and vary across time and space.

**Un-structuredness** as a challenge

### **Social media landscape**

Social media landscape shows how media's world is divided and which particular media platforms are reigning supreme in the digital world at this moment. Given the latest survey available, in India there are about 470.1 million active social media users (Log in at least once in a month) in 2022. This is about 33.4 % of the addressable demographics. Also, Throughout 2021 to 2022, the number of users has grown 4.2 %.

The social media landscape is marked by rapid changes, with video content, AI-driven tools, and privacy issues leading the charge. Platforms continue to evolve, adapting to user demands and societal shifts, while also navigating the challenges of content moderation, influencer culture, and emerging technologies like AR and VR. For businesses and creators, staying ahead of these trends and adapting to evolving audience preferences is crucial to success.

Here's an overview of the current social media landscape:

#### **Dominance of Video Content:**

Short-form video continues to reign supreme, driven by platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. These formats are favored by both users and algorithms due to their ability to capture attention quickly. Live streaming is also increasingly popular, with platforms like Twitch, YouTube Live, and Instagram Live allowing for real-time engagement and interaction. Long-form video remains relevant on platforms like YouTube, which continues to be a go-to for in-depth content, tutorials, vlogs, and entertainment.

#### **TikTok's Continued Growth:**

TikTok has solidified itself as a global powerhouse. It continues to push boundaries with new features, such as TikTok Shopping, TikTok Pulse, and AI-driven content recommendations.

The platform's influence on trends, culture, and even politics is undeniable, and it has transformed how brands approach marketing—focusing more on authenticity and viral content rather than polished ads.

#### **AI and Personalization:**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing a massive role in content creation, discovery, and distribution. From AI-generated music and art to algorithms suggesting the next viral video, platforms are integrating AI tools to personalize user experiences. AI influencers and virtual avatars are on the rise, challenging the traditional human influencer model. AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants are also becoming more prevalent for customer service and brand engagement.

#### **Social Commerce:**

Social media platforms are becoming an integrated shopping experience. Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have heavily invested in e-commerce features, allowing users to shop directly from their feeds. Shoppable posts and integrated payment systems are making it easier for brands to sell products while engaging with their audience.

### **The Rise of Niche and Emerging Platforms:**

While Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now X) still have massive user bases, smaller, niche platforms like Discord, Reddit, BeReal, and Snapchat are gaining traction. Threads, Meta's new social app, was launched to rival Twitter, drawing attention for its integration with Instagram.

Mastodon, a decentralized social network, is becoming more popular with users looking for alternatives to mainstream platforms, focusing on privacy and community-driven features.

### **Privacy and Data Concerns:**

With increasing concerns about data privacy and regulation (such as GDPR in Europe and ongoing US debates), platforms are under pressure to protect user data and give users more control over their information. There is growing interest in decentralized social networks, which give users more control over their data and content.

### **Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR):**

AR filters on platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are increasingly popular, and brands are using AR for immersive experiences, especially in beauty, fashion, and home goods. Metaverse-related projects, particularly in gaming, are continuing to gain traction, with Facebook/Meta pushing forward with its vision of the metaverse through Horizon Worlds and other VR/AR technologies.

### **Influencer Marketing and Creator Economy:**

Influencers remain an integral part of social media marketing, but brands are increasingly focusing on micro and nano-influencers who have smaller but highly engaged audiences. Social media platforms have launched monetization tools for creators, such as subscriptions, badges, and merch integration. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube offer creators more ways to earn from ads, donations, and partnerships. Influencer marketing continues to move towards authenticity, with audiences favoring influencers who align with their values and interests, rather than those promoting too many products.

### **The Evolution of Twitter (X):**

X, formerly Twitter, has undergone significant changes since Elon Musk's acquisition. The platform has shifted its focus toward more free speech and monetization, including features like X Premium subscriptions, and a push to replace traditional advertising with user-generated content. While still influential, X's user base has faced declines and controversies, leading users to explore alternatives like Threads or Mastodon.

### **Mental Health and Social Media:**

The impact of social media on mental health is a growing concern, with discussions around the pressures of comparison, cyberbullying, and addictive behaviors becoming more prominent. Platforms are responding with features like time-limiting tools, content moderation, and mental health resources to address these issues. Younger users are more attuned to these challenges and are seeking out platforms or practices (like digital detoxes) to protect their well-being. A digital detox refers to a period of time when a person intentionally refrains from using digital devices like smartphones, computers, tablets, and social media platforms. The goal is to disconnect from the constant flow of digital information and technology, allowing individuals to reduce stress, improve mental clarity, and focus on more meaningful, offline activities.

### **Content Authenticity & Accountability:**

Authentic content continues to perform better than overly-polished posts. Audiences, especially Gen Z, are looking for realness in what they consume. Corporate accountability and social justice issues are central to many users' values, and brands and influencers are under pressure to take clear stances on political and social issues. Cancel culture, while controversial, remains an aspect of social media interactions.

### **Platform-Specific Features and Tools**

Instagram is embracing video, but still prioritizes photos and carousel posts. It also focuses heavily on Reels and shoppable features. Facebook continues to be a hub for older generations but has been losing younger users. It's still strong in groups, events, and marketplace features. Snapchat has leaned into AR and multimedia content, and is making strides in Snapchat+, a subscription service with exclusive features. Reddit is going stronger with its community-driven content, despite recent controversies about monetization and moderation. YouTube remains a dominant platform for video content but is increasingly prioritizing short-form videos, podcasts, and creator tools.

### **Global Expansion and Regulation**

Social media is becoming more globalized, but governments are increasingly regulating platforms to address issues like misinformation, data security, and hate speech. China and other authoritarian governments are cracking down on social media content and using platforms for state control, while Western governments are introducing data protection laws and anti-monopoly regulations for tech giants.

## **Types of Social Media**

### **Traditional Social Networking Sites**

**Examples:** Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Threads

**Used for:** Connecting directly with customers in specific areas, communities, or interest groups.

**How the businesses can use them:** These flexible platforms are designed to help us share both text and visual content with whomever we like. They share features like networking, event organizing, and advertising, which allows to run specific targeted ads and connect with the right audience to share useful information, promote upcoming local events or run contests. Traditional social platforms also gather lots of information about their users.

### **Image-based Social Media**

**Examples:** Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok (photo mode)

**Used for:** Visual storytelling, brand-building, and social commerce.

**How the businesses can use them:** Almost all image-based social media platforms are great for social commerce. They offer various ways to shop in-app and eliminate the need to drive traffic to an external site. Business houses can sell directly to the customers by building a robust in-app shopping presence. Instagram Shopping allows businesses to create a storefront. They can tag specific products in the images and videos and mention products in the profile bio. Pinterest Shopping allows to connect the store catalog and add shoppable links to search results. The customer also gets a Verified Merchant badge on his/her profile, which creates a sense of security to him/her. With the Snapchat Store feature (currently in beta), brands with verified Snapchat Business profiles can upload a catalog and include a Shop tab on their profile.

If the business caters to a younger demographic, Snapchat is a must. The platform reaches 90% of the 13-24-year-old population and 75% of the 13-34-year-old population in 20+ countries.

TikTok Photo Mode is an image-based format similar to Instagram's carousels. Users can add music to soundtrack their images, and viewers can either swipe through each photo or let them scroll automatically. The businesses can use this format to showcase product collections, announce a sale or giveaway, or tell longer stories.

### **Short-form Video Social Media**

**Examples:** Instagram Reels, TikTok, YouTube Shorts

**Used for:** Sharing short-form video content (usually between five seconds and ninety seconds long)

**How the businesses can use them:** Short-form videos are great for driving brand awareness and bringing products to life. This type of content is quick to film and edit, making it perfect for businesses with a lean social media team. Just note that any video content you publish should entertain, educate, and/or inspire your audience.

### **Livestream Social Media**

**Examples:** Facebook Live, Instagram Live, TikTok Live, Twitch, YouTube

**Used for:** Broadcasting live video to many viewers at once.

**How the businesses can use them:** Livestreaming's popularity exploded during the pandemic. By late 2022, nearly 30% of internet users aged 16-64 were watching livestreams every week. You can use livestreams to launch new products, interview well-known guests, or hosting AMA sessions. Livestreams often include features like live chats and polls. They also allow users to interact live with the hosts, so it's vital to monitor and engage with comments during the stream. Read more tips in our guide to social media live streaming.

## Discussion Forums

**Examples:** Reddit, Quora

**Used for:** Asking and answering questions, networking, and forming communities around niche- and interest-based topics

**How the businesses can use them:** It can be challenging for brands to crack discussion forums. Users can be naturally wary of businesses inserting PR-speak into a community-oriented space. The key to mastering discussion forums is to add value for the customers. Lend the subject matter expertise and answer questions related to the industry. Listen to their issues and offer useful solutions.

We get bonus points if we can share information about the brand and products in the answers. But that shouldn't be our primary goal of participating in discussion forums.

One thing to note: Redditors (as Reddit users are called) dislike answers that include self-promotion. They're likely to downvote this type of post to bury it deep in the feed.

If we are posting as a business, make sure to answer the original question. Only add links to the products if they're genuinely helpful. Before posting in a subreddit, check the rules to verify if including links to own business is allowed.

While Microsoft didn't create the /r/XboxOne subreddit, once they saw how popular it was, they started engaging with Redditors by hosting AMA sessions with game developers to offer tech support.

## Private Community Platforms

**Examples:** Discord, Facebook Groups, Patreon, Slack

**Used for:** Creating communities, with the possibility of requiring registration or other screening measures for new members.

**How the businesses can use them:** Private groups bring your community members together. They can bond over shared challenges and help answer each other's questions without the distraction of unrelated conversations.

Business houses can use the private community to engage with customers, solicit user-generated content, and run contests and promotions that add value for members. They can also use the group welcome screen to ask members questions and learn more about your audience.

The Sorry Girls recently launched a paid online course that includes access to a private Discord server. This type of private community allows you to connect directly with your biggest fans.

The Instant Pot Facebook Group (started by the brand in 2015) has grown to over 3 million members who love sharing recipes and product tips.

When users submit a request to join this group, they must answer a few questions, including:

Which Instant Pot Model do users own?

How long have the user been an Instant Pot user?

What is the user ability level with the Instant Pot?

Do the user agree not to post self-promotion, discussion of brands other than Instant Pot (including images), or use inappropriate language or bullying?

These questions operate like low-lift market research. They allow the Instant Pot marketing team to learn more about their users and create content that targets their pain points.

## Decentralized Social Networks

**Examples:** Bluesky, Mastodon

**Used for:** Building brand awareness, engaging with your community, and monitoring ongoing conversations.

**How the businesses can use them:** Connecting with users to do community outreach and run UGC campaigns. Conducting market research using social listening.

Decentralized social networks such as Mastodon pride themselves on being “radically different” than traditional social media platforms. But what does this mean exactly?

Well, most of the social media platforms we’ve mentioned so far operate on centralized servers. One company calls the shots for everything on its servers.

But unlike traditional social networks, decentralized platforms distribute information across many servers. That means the data isn’t confined to a single server, and no one entity controls it. Users can find communities and interact across servers without worrying about data collection or censorship.

But how can the business use a decentralized social network like Mastodon or Bluesky?

Well, Mastodon is a non-profit organization, and they’re unlikely to ever allow advertising. Bluesky remains invite-only and ad-free. Still, plenty of businesses are operating on both platforms. They’re just using them to create community, conduct market research, and build their brands.