Market Landscape Report

Social Media Marketing and Analytics

The New Face of Customer Engagement

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What Is Social Media Marketing and Analytics?

Social media analytics software gathers information from social networking streams such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as blogs, news feeds, and comments from rich media sites, to better understand customer attitudes and characteristics. This information informs social media marketing campaigns which use these same outlets as marketing channels. Social media marketing software automates the processes and activities associated with marketing campaigns geared toward these channels.

Social media creates new opportunities for companies that want to engage better with customers. Real engagement, which binds customers to companies, can drive revenue gains and reduce the costs associated with customer churn. However, engagement through social media requires new ways to manage and understand customer interactions.

The key to properly managing social media customer interactions is to first listen to customers individually and then as a group. Using the data gathered by social media listening, correlated with other data from internal and external sources, it is possible to better understand customer wants, needs, and desires. From these insights, a marketing professional gains a full picture of how to best message to and approach a customer. The message then has to be deftly transmitted using compelling content delivered through social media channels, which allow the marketing professional to leverage the network amplification characteristics of the social media. Finally, the company has to continue to listen in order to modify and fine tune the message, gauge its effectiveness, and look for other effects that the message may generate.

In other words, social media marketing is like every other marketing campaign: It’s a process that needs to be monitored and managed. The difference is that the social media marketing process is iterative and can change and adapt more quickly than traditional marketing campaigns. Being this adaptive requires platforms that help marketing professionals properly design, initiate, and manage social media marketing campaigns as well as perform the social media analytics that allow for deep customer understanding and monitoring for the effectiveness of these campaigns.

*Figure 1. Social Media Marketing Lifecycle*

The good news is that software can assist with every aspect of this cycle. The bad news is that it is part of a confusing landscape that ranges from integrated suites that manage the entire process to standalone platforms.
that only perform one or two necessary functions. Given how costly much of this software can be (six-figure price tags are not uncommon), understanding a marketing organization’s needs and the goal of social media marketing for the company before purchase is paramount.

**Social Media Software Market Dynamics**

**Who Is the Buyer?**

Social media marketing and analytics purchasing is clearly the domain of the marketing professional, not the IT department. ESG research on the influence of marketing professionals on IT buying showed that 42% reported that they were involved in the final decision to purchase software and 20% said they were the final decision maker.¹ Additional ESG research on corporate knowledge workers show that this is part of a broader trend in non-IT buying fueled by the availability of cloud-based applications.² When marketing professionals buy software, the second most common software they buy is social media marketing, only slightly less frequently cited than content creation tools (33% versus 38%).

This correlates well with vendors’ comments as to who they encounter in purchase situations. No matter the size of the company or agency, it is the marketing professionals who drive the purchase decision. IT is a partner in the decision but only when they are purchasing on-premises software. With the majority of vendors offering cloud solutions, it is expected that marketing professionals will continue to be the purchasers of social media marketing and analytics products and, in fact, all marketing automation products. This is not to say that the IT department has no role in purchasing social media marketing or analytics products. IT is entrusted with ensuring that any software in use in the company meets policies and standards for security and regulatory compliance. They also have a role in integrating the social media marketing and analytics systems into other information technology platforms such as CRM systems. Marketing, however, is the driver for the purchase.

Social media marketing and analytics vendors sell to a large number of industry verticals as well. Given the disparity in responses from independent software vendors (ISVs) as to the industries their customers hail from, it would appear that buying is spread across a number of industry verticals. There are some obvious concentrations in consumer goods and retail, and also computer technology and financial services, but none are dominant. ESG expects that, as social media becomes a more common marketing channel, social media marketing and analytics products will continue to spread out over all industries.

**Agencies versus Corporations**

Many early adopters of social media analytics were advertising and marketing agencies. This is one of the reasons that sentiment analysis became a common form of analysis for social media data. Sentiment analysis gives insight into brand equity and agencies tend to focus on building brands. Subsequently, many social analytics vendors have been selling predominantly to agencies. This trend has been shifting because the purchasing of social media analytics is now done directly by large, multi-brand corporations that need primary market research and a way to drive and evaluate marketing campaigns.

Social media marketing software, on the other hand, is purchased more often by corporations of all sizes. This tends to drive a focus on lead generation over brand building, especially in small and medium enterprises. Corporate marketing professionals are tasked with driving leads to the sales organization and need tools to do so. Having embraced digital marketing automation in the past, it is not a surprise that they are doing the same for social marketing automation, especially when it is a feature of their digital marketing software suites.

Overall, since cloud-based marketing automation products enable marketing professionals to bring social media marketing and analytics in-house, we expect to see more social media marketing responsibilities shift to in-house teams from agencies. This will change the relationship between agencies and their clients as more social media strategy and campaign implementation will be driven from within corporate marketing. Agencies will always have a

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² Source: ESG Research Report, *Corporate Knowledge Worker Survey*, to be published.
place providing advice on brand building strategies and performing overflow activities for large campaigns. Corporate marketing, however, is already taking more control of social media activities and that trend is only going to intensify.

**A Major Goal Is Engagement**

Engagement seems to have become this year’s marketing buzzword. Customer engagement is a set of targeted activities with the goal of creating loyalty to a brand or product. That loyalty should, in turn, drive sales not only in the present but in the future as well. Even more important, companies hope that through peer engagement, loyalty will be passed along to others in a customer’s network.

This is nothing new, though; engaging customers in some fashion has always been the goal of marketing. The difference is the social networking methods used to engage with customers. Social media changes the engagement model from a passive model (in which sellers push messages to buyers hoping they feel a connection) to an active model. With active engagement, messaging is bi-directional. Social media helps companies to have active conversations with customers. Even more importantly, social media can drive active conversation between customers themselves, amplifying the effects of a message while leveraging a trusted source for messages.

Social media marketing platforms can manage these customer conversations individually and collectively at the same time. This is different from more traditional ways of speaking with customers where the communication is asymmetrical or limited to a one-on-one or one-to-few conversation. Typically, marketing professionals have had to rely on asymmetrical communication in which messages to customers are sent out to a large group but companies can only listen to a small sample group. With social media marketing and analytics platforms, companies are now able to speak and listen directly to the entire customer group all at once. At the same time, they can communicate one-on-one with customers. These conversations help customers to feel like a part of something bigger than their last purchase, which is the whole point of engagement.

It is important to note that engagement does not occur unless the company is both listening and speaking. This is the vital interplay between social marketing and social analytics. To listen without speaking is to appear uncaring and unresponsive. To speak and not listen is to remain unconnected with customers, resulting in incorrect messaging and poor results.

**Cost Model Is Different**

Besides customer engagement, another important aspect of social media and social networking are viral networking effects. Generating messages via word of mouth has always been an important part of marketing. Social media brings this to a new level with the ability to share content directly with many people at once. These network effects help to amplify a message dramatically and quickly but at very low incremental cost. The cost of having someone retweet a Twitter Tweet or share a Facebook post is small compared to broadcast media or even e-mail.

That is not to say there is no cost. The cost shifts toward creating content and messages that are compelling enough to induce customers to share it. This is where analytics plays a role in understanding what will drive customers to share content. Social analytics also helps to track the flow of messages in the social networks, helping to gauge the amplification effects and hence, the effectiveness of the content or message. This is yet another reason why social marketing and social analytics platforms need to be tied together in order to manage the entire lifecycle of the social campaign. Otherwise, marketing professionals will not be able to address a failure to amplify or take advantage of opportunities to create amplification events.

**Market Structure**

There are two major components to social media marketing automation platforms: social marketing automation (social marketing) and social media analytics (social analytics). The former provides the toolset for the marketing professional to create and manage successful social media campaigns. The latter is focused on providing useful information by ingesting social media streams, usually referred to as listening; performing analysis that helps detect
important attitudes and demand signals in the marketplace (monitoring); and then performing deeper analysis to better understand customer behavior and buying patterns.

**Social Marketing Capabilities**

The heart of social marketing is the management of social media campaigns. At its most basic, social marketing has to enable marketing professionals to publish a message to major social media outlets, typically Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, and, increasingly, video sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, as well as photo sharing sites such as Pinterest. More importantly, it has to provide the tools to publish content in a controlled fashion with scheduling and coordination of a series of posts as a common feature.

However, the ability to simply post messages, videos, or photos to a site does not make for a true social marketing platform. Instead, social marketing platforms have to be able to:

- Assist in **creating compelling content** designed for social media sites such as Facebook tabs.
- **Automate the publishing** process, including the staging of posts for timed release.
- Manage the overall **social media campaign**, including evaluation of message efficacy.
- Drive opportunities for **amplification** using social network effects and by leveraging influencers.

Social marketing platforms often help marketing professionals create content for distribution or integrate into content creation platforms to better tie together all the social media marketing activities into a single social media management solution. Community management features—tools that assist in engaging individuals within a subset of the market that marketing professionals are trying to reach—are also a common element of comprehensive social marketing solutions.

One of the hallmarks of digital marketing automation products common to social media marketing software is workflow management. Many social media marketing solutions include some way of managing the creation, revision, **review**, and release of content. Workflows are essential to ensuring that posts are on message, compelling, and comply with company policies and government regulations.

**Social Analytics Capabilities**

Social analytics are divided into two basic components. Different vendors express these components differently but both types of features are necessary for social media analytics to be meaningful. These components are:

- **Listening**, which really means ingesting, aggregating, and adding metadata to social media feeds.
- **Monitoring and analysis**, which entails looking for trends over time such as changes in sentiment, share of voice, and volume of posts.

Additionally, some products include deeper, offline analysis of data to discern important information such as profiles of customers who have a propensity to buy a product.

Listening is, in essence, gathering, aggregating, and conditioning data for presentation. Many listening services or software will normalize data and add additional metadata from other sources. A common technique for listening platforms is to correlate metadata from one type of stream with other streams that don’t carry this type of metadata.

Monitoring and analysis are often expressed as a series of short term trends, usually three months or less, attempting to detect a change in demand signals such as sentiment and influence. These, in turn, may detect that an event has occurred such as an issue with a product or successful launch of a new brand. Monitoring relies on both historical and current sources of social media data, typically from a listening service or package. Deeper analysis usually entails offline processing of historical data (meaning data that is not being acquired in real-time) to gain deeper insight into market trends and customer behavior.
**Common Social Analytics**

Social media analytics are based on existing text analysis such as natural language processing and machine learning. This provides the raw material for other types of analysis. Social marketing professionals rely on a number of common forms of analysis. Each tries to tease out a different type of information from the social media stream.

The most commonly encountered types of social media analysis are:

- Sentiment and other demand signals
- Reach and influence
- Customer profiling

Sentiment analysis attempts to understand from social media posts how positively or negatively a company, brand, or product is perceived. Comparing changes in sentiment before and after a marketing activity may also be used to judge the efficacy of a marketing campaign. It is one type of demand signal that social marketing professionals use as indicators of a change in attitude that may affect brand equity or product demand. Other types of demand signals such as opinions (opinion analysis), likes and dislikes, and common themes signal possible changes in buying behaviors.

Reach and influence, while related, are not the same. Reach can be thought of as the actual or potential number of listeners a message may have at some point in time. It can be measured, at least in part, by the size of a network that is reachable given a company’s followers. Influence is an assessment of the ability of followers to induce their network to spread a message. Total volume of mentions as well as the number of reposts are two measures of influence. Some vendors incorporate Klout’s scores into their influence ratings as well. In analyzing influence, marketing professionals try to identify specific nodes in the network—which represent members in a community—who are willing and capable of spreading a message. These influencers are typically targeted for additional attention. What influence scores don’t look for is how the message changes or whether it spreads in a positive or negative manner.

An increasingly common type of analysis is customer profiling. Customer profiling, sometimes referred to as audience targeting or audience segmentation, attempts to create rated profiles of potential or actual customers and their behaviors. The analysis attempts to discern what purchasing actions a potential customer may take, derived from individual behaviors reported in social media and augmented by data from other sources. Companies can marry this type of analysis with predictive analysis to develop lists of leads to market to directly. These leads can then be reached through social media campaigns or other marketing activities.

Social media marketing and social media analytics software build these profiles in different ways. Some focus on direct interactions, more like a CRM system, collecting information from responses to marketing campaigns over time. Others use a more analytics-based approach, deriving customer information from social media often with the help of other information from both internal and external, publically available sources.

**Suites and Standalone Products**

The social marketing and social analytics segments are organized around feature sets in the following manner:

- **Point solutions** address only one functional area of the social marketing landscape.
- **Integrated social media solutions** combine a number of tools together into a unified package.
- **Digital marketing automation software** includes social media marketing and analytics as a component of a broader marketing platform.

It is impossible to generalize about the best approach and say “this model is better than the others.” It is fair to say that integrated solutions are becoming more common—examples of which would be the social marketing automation solutions from Oracle, Salesforce.com, and Shoutlet, to name a few. Vendors such as Adobe, HubSpot,

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3 A Klout score is a measure of social media influence based on an analysis of social media data streams by the company also called Klout.
and Marketo have made social media a key feature of their more general digital marketing automation solutions. That said, there are still many popular point solutions such as Hootsuite’s social media publishing platform and the IDInteract analytics and reward marketing solution.

Market Participants

The market can appear, at first, to be a jumble of companies with considerable feature overlap yet rarely 100% overlap. This makes head-to-head comparisons difficult for someone looking to add social media marketing and analytics capabilities to her marketing environment. However, if products are initially evaluated within broad categories against the overall needs of the organization, a picture may emerge that zeroes in on the software that best matches the organizational needs.

A Framework for Evaluation

Social media marketing and analytics software can be complex to evaluate from a buyer’s perspective. There is great disparity in the feature sets of many of these packages, ranging from limited purpose standalone applications and services, to multifunctional products designed to manage and automate all marketing activities. To make this complexity simple, ESG groups broad feature sets into manageable categories. These categories are best informed by the structure of the market; that is to say Social Marketing and Social Analytics with subcategories of features.

With this framework in mind, it is possible to get a general idea of the features a product emphasizes and how that aligns with an organization’s needs. In this report, we will be looking at product features based on this framework in the following manner:

- **Digital Marketing Automation**, or whether the social media marketing or analytics features are a component of a broader digital marketing automation suite. Other products may work alongside other digital marketing automation tools without being a component of a broader, integrated suite.

- **Publication**, which is the ability to publish to social media and social networks both on the fly and as a scheduled activity.

- **Amplification**, as in the ability to actively amplify messages using the characteristics of social networks. This is different than simple publishing in that it requires tools to help incent and track messages in a social network, as opposed to passive amplification via natural network effects.

- **Social Media Campaign Management**, which, unlike publishing, refers to the ability to manage multiple multifaceted social media campaigns from content creation through evaluation. This includes workflow management for social media marketing campaigns.

- **Listening**, which entails ingesting and aggregating social media streams and adding important metadata to those streams.

- **Monitoring and Analysis**, which includes performing analysis on incoming streams in both real-time or near real-time (monitoring) and offline (analysis).

- Three types of common social analytics: **sentiment analysis and demand signals, influence, and customer profiling**, also known as audience segmentation.

Many other features are also important—workflows, other demand signals, and content creations, for example—but are not yet universal both in need and availability.
### Table 1. Social Media Marketing and Analytics Vendors

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◆ Eloqua, which is not yet fully integrated  * Through the partnership with Netbase

Adobe

Adobe fields a complete suite of digital marketing tools. Comprised of an entire set of tools for the large enterprise, Adobe Marketing Cloud encompasses social media analytics (Adobe Social) and web analytics provided by Adobe Analytics (SiteCatalyst), publishing (again both web and social), digital media optimization such as SEO, alongside software to fine tune content across different types of platforms including multiple mobile platforms.

The social component on the Adobe Marketing Cloud, Adobe Social, fields a comprehensive array of social media marketing and analytics tools. Adobe Social can both publish and respond to posts, including publishing and campaign workflow management, and analyze social media, enabling the complete social media marketing cycle.

Adobe provides a comprehensive set of social analytics such as sentiment, reach, and influence analysis, though it leans on partners for some analytical elements. Combined with the web analytics feature of Adobe Marketing Cloud, Adobe can combine social, behavioral and conversion data to provide a comprehensive view of the market and buying behavior. Adobe Social’s real strength is its ability to tie these social media analytics directly to onsite conversions, including incoming leads and web sales, using the web analytics and e-commerce components. This provides a view of how social media activities affect brand equity and how that rise in brand equity drives sales leads.

Attensity

Attensity began as a text analytics company that has adapted its technology to a variety of uses, most lately social media analytics. Its portfolio includes a listening platform (Attensity Pipeline) and monitoring and analytics features (Attensity Command Center and Attensity Analyze). These features can look for and visualize a number of demand signals, including sentiment, and build customer profiles. Attensity Analyze can also combine social media data with a number of other internal and external sources including e-mail and CRM data to provide a more complete “voice of the customer” and customer profile. While Attensity’s software analysis is strongest from demand signals such as sentiment, it does provide some reach and influence scoring. The Net Promoter scoring, for example, provides a measure of influence.

Attensity Respond is another part of the Attensity suite that allows community managers and other marketing professionals to determine problems within groups of customers and respond to them. The software can connect to existing business applications to generate trouble tickets and other action items that facilitate responses to customers in a variety of ways.

Constant Contact

The roots of Constant Contact are in e-mail marketing, which is why it is no surprise that its software makes an excellent connection between e-mail and social media campaigns. Unlike many of the products in this space, Constant Contact’s Social Campaigns social media marketing product is designed specifically for small businesses. It has many of the same features that the larger social marketing products do but in a simplified manner.

Social Campaigns focuses on the creation and publishing of the type of social media posts that drive leads directly to small businesses. It has tools that help to create social media content, such as Facebook pages, using templates that include coupons and other action-oriented responses. The software then allows the small business owner to publish the content and promote it. One of the most common promotional schemes is the use of e-mail lists (through a tie-in with their Email Marketing product). Using existing e-mail contact lists, the small business marketer can drive traffic to the social networking content where it can, in turn, be shared. This way, the e-mail campaign can leverage the amplification capabilities of the social media channel.

Constant Contact has some rudimentary social analytics, mostly to show the reach of the social marketing campaigns. This level of analysis is probably all that a small business really needs to measure the efficacy of its campaigns and its potential to drive more customers to the business.
**Crimson Hexagon**

In the wide spectrum of social media marketing and analytics tools, Crimson Hexagon’s ForSight clearly fits in the social analytics space. Even more specifically, it provides social media analytics for large, multi-brand, multinational companies. This, rather than restraining Crimson Hexagon, provides a laser-like focus on deep analysis of complex social media data.

Most products in this space rely, to a large extent, on keyword searches and natural language processing. Crimson Hexagon forgoes those techniques in favor of machine learning. ForSight doesn’t just take simple inputs such as keywords and allow you to refine the data after the fact. Instead, it requires that a human being, with domain knowledge and thorough understanding of the company’s business, train the product until it can understand the elements in the social media data stream that are important to the company.

ForSight employs a wide range of analytics to social media data in order to enable decision making, including measures of sentiment, reach, and influence, the last in a partnership with Klout. It performs deeper analysis such as cluster analysis as well. Most interesting is its ability to tease out opinions coded in the social media, which can be correlated with sentiment. This allows marketing professionals to understand why consumers feel positively or negatively. This type of deep understanding is then used to determine which events, messages, and people are driving changes in brand equity and ultimately revenue.

**Datasift**

Datasift is a listening and aggregation platform. It collects posts from a variety of social media streams and, using a data query language, allows customers to pull extracts from those streams that suit their needs. Datasift can also combine the social media stream information with other metadata such as geographic information.

The data query language is simple yet powerful. It makes ad hoc extracts from vast amounts of social media data easy to implement for a marketing professional or data scientist. Datasift doesn’t do any analytics, being strictly a listing and extraction tool, but can feed data into other packages for analysis.

**GaggleAMP**

For GaggleAMP, the main focus is on message amplification. GaggleAMP provides tools that help a publisher of social media posts to leverage his existing networks, especially employees, partners, and customers. It provides the tools and incentives for others to rebroadcast the message. Most importantly, it allows companies to control what and to whom they do so. This feeling of control makes the act of rebroadcasting seem safer and removes an inhibitor to their doing so.

GaggleAMP also provides social analytics to help marketing professionals to assess the reach of their posts and determine who the influencers are. This allows them to better target requests for rebroadcasting. Also, by tracking messages as they traverse social networks, GaggleAMP can help to uncover potential sales leads and report them back to marketing professionals for follow up.

**HootSuite**

HootSuite is a well-known free business tool for publishing and watching social media and social networking posts. As a tool for individual business use, it competes with companies such as TweetDeck as a better interface to multiple social media and social networking properties such as Facebook and Twitter. HootSuite becomes a professional tool for corporate marketing with the Pro and Enterprise versions.

The two cores of HootSuite are publishing and monitoring. It provides a bevy of features that help customers to craft, review, revise, and finally release posts to all the usual social media and social networking outlets. Features such as co-managed accounts and secure profiles provide a safe environment for releasing posts either as an organization or as individuals.

HootSuite also helps to organize how social media is watched with lists, keyword searches, and analytics that deliver information about reach and influence. Unique amongst standalone products, Hootsuite incorporates its
own enterprise social networking tools that assist posters in making decisions about publishing and those watching social media streams to discuss the meaning and actions that should be taken because of what they see in social media.

**HubSpot**

HubSpot is more than a social media marketing solution. It is an entire electronic inbound marketing automation tool that features lead generation. It encompasses web marketing (including SEO), e-mail, and social media content creation and publishing married with web and e-mail analytics. Using the HubSpot-created Inbound Marketing Methodology, customers create compelling content, push that content to users, and track their responses via e-mail and websites.

The software looks at both the type and quality of responses to generate leads that can be managed from within HubSpot through its integrated contact management database or transferred to a customer relationship management (CRM) system for sales follow up. HubSpot provides marketing and sales professionals with a dashboard that allows them to see at a glance the outbound and inbound activity generated by electronic and social media marketing programs. It also uses this information to build customer profiles that aid sales and marketing in targeting customers.

HubSpot provides tools that help with social media marketing without going too deep. Instead, HubSpot tries to balance depth and width of tools with ease of use. For example, HubSpot relies on direct replies to a website or via an e-mail to gauge the effectiveness of a campaign instead of complex and sophisticated social analytics. This allows organizations to create reasonably effective social marketing campaigns without the resources of a large company or agency.

**IDInteract**

IDInteract combines aspects of social marketing with social analytics. It uses analytics, embodied in the Social Radar product, to discover demand signals within social media data. From this, it can push out offers and other enticements to customers. To do this, IDInteract creates what it terms “personas” which are collections of customer profiles. An important aspect of the persona is a viral score that is based on individual interests and measures the likelihood that an individual will spread a particular type of message.

Analysis is segmented by groups of like personas, looking for events or changes that signal a change in demand for a product and opportunities for outreach. The software then pushes messages out to groups as big as a market segment or as small as an individual. It uses additional analysis of social media to determine the efficacy of the outreach and adjust messages accordingly.

**Infegy**

Infegy provides software to marketers who need to better understand customers through social media. To provide this information to customers, Infegy deploys a social media marketing system of its own design called Social Radar. Social Radar ingests common social media data streams from Twitter, Facebook, etc., and provides different types of analysis such as sentiment and volume trends, in a dashboard-like front-end.

The Infegy software is geared toward market research more than enabling lead generation. The purpose is to help marketing professionals better target specific audiences through a variety of marketing channels. One feature called Audience Targeting is clearly designed with this in mind. Audience Targeting helps to produce profiles of potential customers which can then be used to segment broader audiences for more custom messaging.

**Marketo**

It is not fair to evaluate Marketo’s social media marketing products by themselves, so intertwined are they with the other marketing automation products that are part of the Marketo platform. It is this comprehensive approach to
marketing that is the hallmark of Marketo’s social products. While the social media marketing products cover the expanse of social marketing (though not analytics), the true power comes from its ability to tie other marketing activities, including e-mail and website marketing, in with social media.

Marketo’s focus is clearly in lead management through social media. The content creation tools, e-mail marketing, and publishing aspects of the product focus on activities such as offers, polls, and forms that capture information about prospects and drive leads back to the company. At present, it doesn’t provide tools for brand building or market conditioning. For example, it doesn’t push scheduled messages out to Twitter. Instead, the tools help marketing professionals to easily create content for destination pages such as Facebook tabs and websites which are then promoted via e-mail and social media sites.

Marketo does have workflow capabilities, which help users to define roles and the actions that users in certain roles can perform. These actions include editing, creation, and approval. Following a more on-demand model, approval actually means publish.

**Oracle**

The Oracle Social Relationship Management (SRM) name represents an entire portfolio of social media marketing and analytics products that Oracle fields. Oracle has assembled a full suite of social marketing and analytics software with the Oracle SRM Suite which is based on a series of acquisitions including Vitrue, Collective Intelligence, and Involver, with some additional work by its own development teams, Oracle has assembled a full suite of social marketing and analytics software. With the latest acquisition of Eloqua, Oracle stretches beyond social media into a full digital marketing software solution set. Currently, the heart of the SRM suite is Social Engagement & Monitoring which includes social media listening, monitoring, and analytics along with community management, and Social Marketing, which covers the content creation and publishing aspects of social media marketing along with additional analytics.

Social Engagement & Monitoring combines the social media listening platform from Collective Intelligence with the community management features of Involver. It allows marketing professionals to gain insights from social media data such as the typical sentiment, reach, and influence analysis. Oracle includes a semantic analysis component that helps to classify social media posts to identify demand signals which it terms “indicators.” From these indicators, a community manager can drill into individual groups of posts and respond or have others take action based on what the indicators tell them.

The Social Marketing component helps marketing professionals to create and publish compelling content. Scheduling and simple workflow ensure that posts are released in a controlled manner across several social channels. Posts can include secure links and tags that help track the effects of the social media marketing efforts, allowing for fine tuning of campaigns.

Oracle has integrated Oracle SRM into some of its business applications such as its CRM products, providing that vital link between marketing and sales which facilitates lead generation and ultimately sales. It has also included Oracle Social Network in the Oracle SRM suite to facilitate collaboration around marketing and sales activities. As Oracle further integrates other products in its portfolio such as Eloqua, which provides a digital marketing automation solution as well as social campaign management, and its Oracle WebCenter website content management products, expect Oracle to emerge as a one stop shop for sales and marketing automation.

**Salesforce.com**

Salesforce.com Marketing Cloud offers a wide range of components that, together, form a complete social media marketing automation suite. Many of these components have come from acquisitions such as Radian6 (social media analytics) and BuddyMedia (publishing and content placement) augmented by a series of workflow tools that automate many digital marketing tasks. Salesforce.com Marketing Cloud can help listen to and analyze data from social media streams to help plan content and campaigns, publish content to social media properties, manage the workflows involved in social media campaigns, and see the results through additional analysis.
Since successful social media campaigns start with compelling content, Salesforce.com Marketing Cloud has content creation tools that simplify the process of creating rich content and social applications. It can then publish this content to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and corporate websites alike, creating tie-ins between web and social marketing.

As part of the Salesforce.com family of cloud-based products, Salesforce.com Marketing Cloud also benefits from a close association with Salesforce.com’s other products, especially Sales Cloud. Together they form a tight connection between marketing activities and the sales activities they drive. The common rules engine, Social Hub, provides the glue between the products, routing information gleaned from the social analytics to other Salesforce.com products, especially Service Cloud and Sales Cloud. Through these integrations, social media market intelligence can be used to drive business actions.

**SAP**

SAP has taken an unusual step for a major ISV by basing a good part of its product offering on a partnership with NetBase. Unusual can be good, though, and in this case it is a good strategy for SAP customers. The product, called SAP Social Media Analytics by NetBase, provides customers with the sales, service, and marketing enablement and analytics features through the on-premises SAP CRM and SAP Customer OnDemand, the cloud CRM application. Delivered by NetBase, SAP Social Media Analytics augments these features with a social media listening and analytics platform that covers a wide range of analysis including sentiment, the underlying themes that make up customer sentiment, measures of reach and influence, and the ability to drill down into the underlying data to facilitate direct customer interactions. Outside of an acquisition, there was no faster path to creating a total environment needed by customers engaged in digital and social marketing.

While analytics are important, the ability to respond to what the analysis tells you is more so. SAP Social OnDemand provides that ability by providing community management tools that allow social media marketing and service professionals to respond to the underlying posts that make up the analysis. The toolset allows companies to engage with customers over social media to gauge community feedback and maintain online relationships.

**Shoutlet**

Shoutlet fields a comprehensive digital media marketing solution with an emphasis on social media marketing. The software combines content publishing; community management and customer profiles; tools to develop, amplify, and track social media content such as Facebook applications; reporting and analytics; and social media listening with a bevy of workflow management tools.

The marriage between content and workflows is quite strong with Shoutlet. Content can be driven by workflows based on the type of content and roles of people creating or publishing the content to ensure proper reviews of sensitive posts such as earnings reports. Shoutlet also shows strength in the analytics category with web analytics, reach, influence, and sentiment analysis all tied together and integrated into campaign management.

These features are further enhanced by automated campaign management features called Social Switchboard, which alter content according to a set of rules governed by triggers or events. Another automation tool, Social Canvas, builds the content, such as contests and applications, that can then be pushed out to mobile, social media, and websites. Taken together, they represent a comprehensive set of campaign automation tools.

The product also supports a community management tool that it calls Social CRM.\(^4\) More than just a customer tracking tool, the Social CRM module combines analytics and interactions with customers to form customer profiles that inform marketing campaigns.

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\(^4\) Shoutlet’s use of the term Social CRM should not to be confused with the typical usage of Social CRM as social features embedded in CRM systems.
**Simply Measured**

With Simply Measured, the name says it all. It is an analysis tool that is designed for the marketing professional, not the data scientist or IT professional. Simply Measured focuses on the analysis and presentation of social media data in a way that is understandable to non-technical people. Capable of fielding a variety of standard reports that cover a wide range of activities as well as constructing custom reports, Simply Measured provides turnkey analytics including amplification, reach, influence, and web analytics.

In keeping with the theme of simplicity, Simply Measured eschews fancy, real-time, drill-down analytics in favor of attractive graphics that can easily be downloaded to Microsoft PowerPoint slides. Simply Measured also allows for a look at the data behind the scenes through exports for Microsoft Excel, allowing marketing professionals to manipulate the data in other useful ways.

**Visible Technologies**

Visible Technologies focuses on providing market insights from social media data. It does this by providing a combination listening and monitoring/analytics platform that can both ingest social media streams and perform different forms of analysis on them. At present, Visible Technologies can ingest news feeds, blogs, social networking streams such as Facebook and Twitter, content rich sites such as YouTube, and many others. It coordinates and enriches the posts with metadata from all the sources it ingests, including geocoding information.

The company offers an array of monitoring and analysis features as well. Visible Technologies allows customers to perform sentiment analysis as well as look at reach and influence. Customers can drill down into the data using keyword and field-search capabilities, including content filters.

**Social Media Analytics Pitfalls**

Many marketing professionals seem to feel the need to embrace “big data” solutions and social media, and to become more data driven in their decision making. The danger in doing so is that they will become overly reliant on the data from these systems and on marketing through social media channels. While social media is a viable source of information and valid marketing channel, social media marketing and analytics tools also have several drawbacks and caveats. These include problems with bias, message drift, and analyzing non-textual content. Marketing professionals should consider social media data and channels as some of many tools in their marketing toolkits but not the only ones. Traditional market research and marketing channels cannot be ignored in favor of social media.

**Age and Geographic Bias**

At present, an acknowledged bias in social media data can affect social media analytics’ output. Social media use is more likely amongst younger people and in certain geographies. This age bias is similar to the way phone-based consumer surveys can be biased toward an older, landline-owning demographic. There are geographic biases in social media as well. For example, more activity in social media exists on the East and West Coasts of the United States than in other places, causing this data to have an outsized effect.

Some social media analytics vendors normalize their data in an effort to reduce these biases. Even so, marketing professionals need to consider bias when making decisions. For products targeted at a younger, urban demographic, this is a positive bias. When marketing to more general groups, social media data can only be viewed in light of data from other sources that does not have these biases.

It is worth noting that it is possible that this bias will disappear over time. As social media becomes part of the normal fabric of commercial interactions, as websites have become, some of the biases will dilute or dissolve. That is likely to be far into the future, however, and marketing professionals need to approach social media data with these biases in mind.
A Downside to Amplification

One of the reasons that social media is such a cost-effective marketing tool is amplification. Using network effects, social media can take an investment in content and messaging and spread it with little to no incremental costs.

Amplification has a serious drawback though: message drift. It’s a new take on the old psychology experiment called “the telephone game.” Social media followers often simply repost—in other words, share—posts and content. That’s preferred since it amplifies without changing the message. It doesn’t always work that way though. Sometimes people will rephrase or shorten a message, inadvertently changing the meaning. When viewers comment on a post, blog, or video, they can change the basic message encoded in the post, even interjecting entirely new messages. With social media, it is difficult to control the message without constant attention.

Non-textual Information Presents a Problem

Another potential problem with social analytics platforms is their reliance on text data. Most sentiment analysis and demand signal tools, for example, are unable to directly analyze the growing amount of image, video, and audio content. While many of these products can provide useful information derived from the metadata and comments associated with social content, they cannot decode the actual meaning of the non-textual content itself where the majority of the information is contained. This means that the growing body of content contained in video blogs, on video sharing sites such as YouTube, on photo sharing sites such as Instagram and Pinterest, or in podcasts as well as much of the content on Facebook do not yet figure prominently into social media analysis.

Making an Educated Investment

Before deciding on any social media marketing or analytics products or suites, the most important question to answer is, “Why implement a social media marketing or analytics solution?” Social media marketing and analytics tools can address a limited number of important activities. Keep in mind, most products, especially the social media marketing products, are optimized for certain activities and company size.

After that, the decisions become more mechanical. They boil down to:

- Is there a need for a complete solution or will a point solution be enough?
- How well can the vendor validate its analysis or methodology and what biases are inherent in social media?
- Does the company need to have its own platform or can it work with a service?

Deciding on how social media information will be delivered—through direct access to a software platform or as part of a marketing service—depends on how often the organization needs the data and what it will be used for. For occasional need, especially for profiles for specific campaigns, a service that provides lists for specific activities, in much the same way organizations purchase e-mailing lists or one outsources website development, likely will suffice. When the goal is ongoing social media activities, having a platform that delivers a wide range of social media analytics and helps to conduct regular social media marketing activities may serve better.

Reasons to Implement a Social Media Solution

Marketing professionals look to implement social media solutions of any type for three primary reasons: lead generation, brand management, and market research. Products in this space reflect these marketing activities. Most publishing tools, along with sentiment analysis, focus on injecting positive messages into the marketplace. For brand builders, social analytics also allows them to test the efficacy of social brand building.

Some social media marketing publishing tools also have a lead-generation component as well. This is usually expressed as content pushed out to Facebook tabs and websites that contain coupons, contests, and other offers designed to gather leads. Integrated or social media marketing suites, along with customer profiling, are more likely to try to drive traffic back to the company website or through e-mail for lead generation.
Finally, a subset of social media analytics products tries to produce data for more general market research. These solutions offer a wide array of information, leaving it to the marketing professional to determine how the data is used.

**Suite or Point Solution**

There is considerable debate about whether standalone, so-called “best of breed,” products are a better way to approach social media marketing and analytics. Since analytics and marketing are intertwined, it would appear that the suites provide a better environment and value. In addition, “best of breed” is highly subjective. Components of integrated solutions can themselves be a best choice for an organization. Suites not only provide a unified process, but also a more complete view of the social media landscape.

Suites do provide more functionality but require more commitment to learning and resources. In many cases, especially for smaller organizations, they may be overkill. More extensive analytics may not be necessary for running lead generation campaigns while publishing tools are not warranted when the goal is to augment current market research.

*Figure 2. Social Media Marketing and Analytics Product Decision Tree*

![Decision Tree Image](image-url)

*Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2013.*

**Validation of Analysis and Algorithms**

For social media analytics to be of value, it has to provide valid and reliable data. Otherwise, it is worse than no data at all, since bad data will lead organizations down the wrong decision path. For this reason, it is essential to validate the analysis and algorithms in order to have confidence in the results. If the methodology and math cannot be verified as true, then decisions cannot be made based on the data.
This exposes a common problem with social media analytics: Most vendors only validate the data themselves. While some can provide validation against customer metrics such as key performance indicators, this method is narrowly focused on specific companies and circumstances. No vendors seem willing to provide broad external validation. Part of the reason for this lack of external validation is a lack of standard measures for social media analytics. In the end, true validation has to be considered in terms of desired business outcomes and those are only being measured individually by customers.

Vendors can validate that their sentiment analysis algorithm can detect some positive or negative trend in how customers feel about a company, brand, or product, perhaps even the themes driving the sentiment, but not how that change in sentiment affects revenue. It’s still a leap of faith. As marketing professionals gain in social media sophistication, they will demand that results be verified both broadly and in terms of their own needs before making a purchase.

Outside of an external agency validating results before purchase, the best method is to run a trial. During a trial period, it would be possible to see how well the social media analysis correlates to real-world experience, especially key performance indicators.

**Software Platform or Service?**

Not to be confused with the choice over implementing the tools on-premises versus Software-as-a-Service or cloud software, this decision is really about whether it makes sense to fully outsource the social media marketing and analysis. Depending on the frequency of social marketing campaigns and the internal resources devoted to social media, having a service provider such as an agency perform social media marketing tasks may make sense. Social media campaigns tend to be continuous cycles of analysis, messaging, content placement, evaluation, and more analysis. This makes them resource-intensive. The decision comes down to the benefits of control versus the resources to have that control.

**Social Media Analytics Is Not Just For Social Marketing**

Social media analytics is a key part of social media marketing but also all marketing campaigns. Like all data analytics, social analytics informs all marketing decisions and content creation. It also provides critical data for other types of decision making. For example, rising sentiment in social media streams may indicate increased demand for a product which, in turn, may indicate a looming supply problem that needs to be planned for.

It is important to remember that social media analytics are a form of business intelligence. It represents another source of information to help make business decisions. Customer profiling especially represents a crossover between business intelligence and social analytics. Data from core systems of record such as CRM are vital to creating a viable customer profile while social media data represents a new source of information about the business as a whole.

**Social Media Marketing and Analytics Market Trends**

**How Early Are We in the Market?**

Social media and social networking are not new, at least in the consumer space. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs, and all types of social media have a legacy that is more than ten years old. That doesn't translate to a ten-year history with corporate marketing. Much of corporate marketing interactions with social media have been either for advertising or by individuals. It is only more recently that corporations have begun to approach social media and social networking from an overall campaign perspective.

Social marketing is, however, very much on the minds of marketing professionals. In recent ESG research, 41% of marketing professionals surveyed who were involved in IT purchases said that they had been involved in purchasing decisions around social media marketing. That’s the same percentage that was involved in CRM purchase decisions. In addition, 33% of marketing professionals who purchased IT products without IT involvement purchased social media marketing software, a considerably higher percentage than those who purchased CRM software on their
own (19%). Social media marketing is clearly a priority for marketing professionals. This signals that we are likely in a market that is quickly heading toward mainstream acceptance amongst marketing professionals.

This is not surprising given the cost advantage of marketing via social media and social networking and the ability to engage customers directly and more fully versus other forms of media. Social marketing, however, relies on social analytics to understand customer behavior enough to create engagement and leverage network effects at a low cost. These analytics suffer from a lack of external validation and relatively high cost. So, while social media marketing is quickly coming into its own, the social media analytics products it depends on are still developing.

Social Media Marketing and Analytics Will Become a Feature

At the moment, there is still a fair number of standalone solutions for both social media marketing and social media analytics. This is unlikely to be the case in the future. The number of products that integrate social media marketing and social media analytics is significant and growing. More so, the number of general marketing automation platforms that include social media marketing is also growing. This makes sense since social media is really just another marketing channel, like e-mail or print. The same is true for social media analytics merging into general business intelligence (BI) platforms. Social media is another source of information on the overall health of the company. It makes sense that BI platforms would eventually embrace a new source of data and analysis.

Whether social analytics is part of the marketing automation suite or part of the BI platform will depend on whether it is used to make marketing decisions or general business decisions. Expect to see social analytics in both and for social marketing to become a subset of marketing automation.

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The Bigger Truth

Sharing is the reason that both customers and companies are moving to social media as a major medium. Customers can trust messages that are shared by peers and actively engage with the original poster of the message. For marketing professionals, reach and amplification are the primary reasons that social media has value. The sharing effects of social media and social networking provide a method of spreading messages beyond the instance of the message at a low incremental cost.

The key to success is to marry social media marketing to social analytics. Social analytics informs the social media message and content. The marketing professional is better able to create compelling content and generate messages that are more likely to amplify naturally. It also gives marketing professionals the opportunity to measure the efficacy of the messages and fine tune them to better meet their objectives. Knowing about customers and markets is not enough, though. That knowledge must drive actions. Social marketing platforms assist marketing professionals to act on customer information in a way that encourages ongoing engagement.

Each type of product is powerful individually. Together, they are much more. With social media marketing, one plus one really equals three.
ESG Social Media Marketing and Analytics Coverage

The following is a best-effort representation of vendors that have briefed ESG analysts over the past six months. It is not intended to represent an exhaustive listing of all solution providers in this particular segment.

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