

Are you using social data optimally?

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Social media data is being recognised by marketers as a goldmine for consumer insights and slowly becoming an intrinsic part of consumer research. Consumer participation in social media is increasing rapidly with the sharing of experiences and views on various products and services. Not surprisingly, marketers are keen to tap into this to aid their understanding of social media savvy consumers and what makes them tick. In addition, social media analysts and researchers are tasked with unravelling these insights. How can marketers derive value from social media conversations? And what are the challenges faced by market researchers?

Focusing on the Indian market, this paper aims to provide a complete overview on how we optimise social media data for marketers.

Market research is now looking at multiple sources of data to provide a well-rounded data capture and analysis. Aside from qualitative and quantitative methods, there are different methods of data collection being used increasingly – such as ethnography, gamified questionnaires, exit interviews, eye-tracking and many more. Now marketers are adding social media analysis as a key output for incisive, first-hand consumer insights.

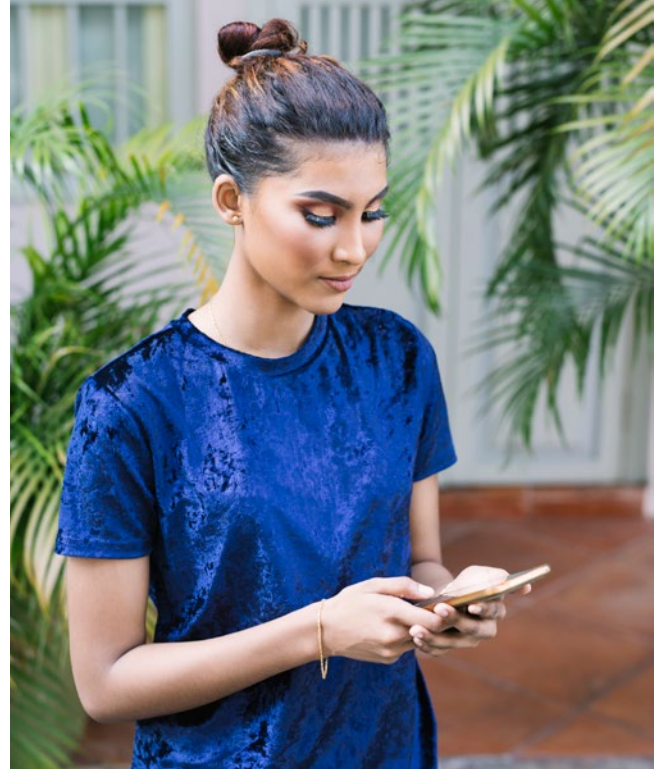
Social media in India

Social media encompasses all online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, and includes interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Social media data that is considered for analysis is primarily from social networking sites. In 2021, it is estimated that 24% of the Indian population will be accessing social networks, up from 15% in 2017¹. Statistics show that the content Indian users interact with on social media platforms is inspirational, funny/entertaining, personal status updates etc. These conversations, initiated by consumers on social media, are termed User Generated Content (UGC) and are useful for consumer research (different from the brand messages, promotions etc. which don't offer consumer insights).

Most active platforms in India

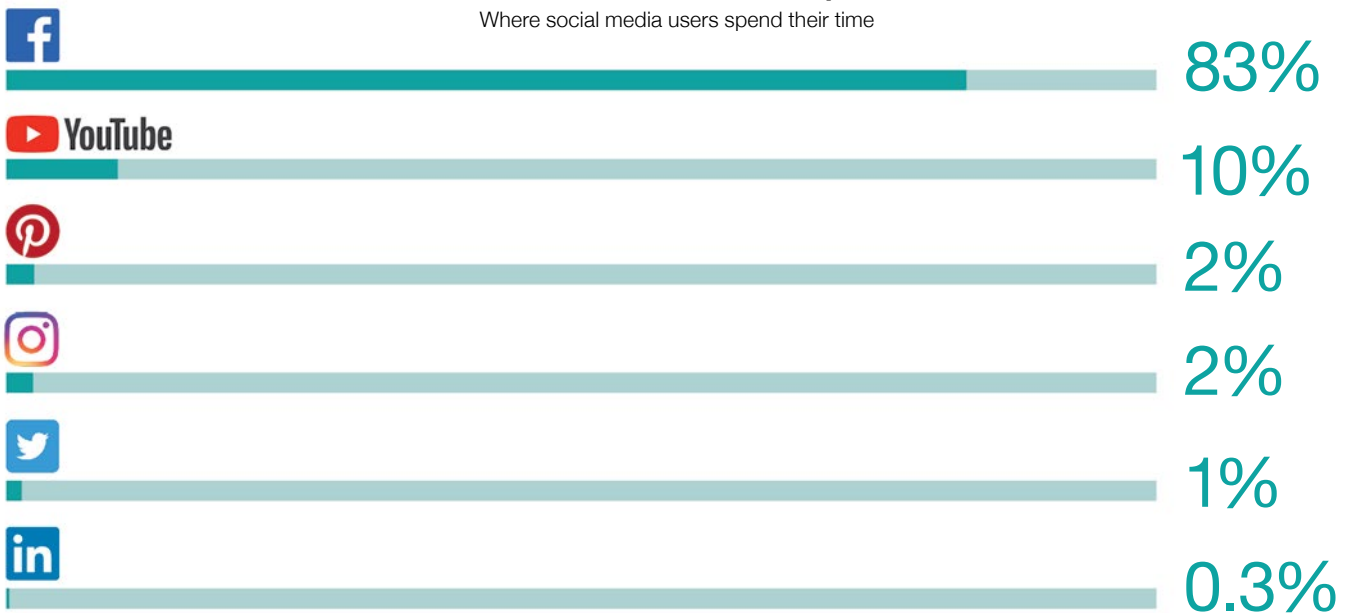
The term "tech savvy" is passe, the new buzzword is "social media savvy". Social media is all pervasive, covering all age groups, gender and socio-economic classifications. The RAI-Deloitte *Trendsetting Millennials Report* (2018) shows that Gen Y/Millennials (34% in India vs 27% global) thrive on social media and are shaping marketing strategies². For Gen Z, who are growing up on the internet, social media is second nature. The nature of social data has moved from text to being more image-driven with Instagram and Snapchat leading the way. The penetration of social savviness is where India is still growing.

India is a Facebook country. StatCounter Global Stats tells us Facebook is the dominant platform where Indian users spend 83% of all their social media time, with YouTube a distant second at 10%³. Access is mostly on mobile.



Social media stats in India - April 2018

Where social media users spend their time



Source: StatCounter Global Stats

Key topics for social expressions

Statistics show that Indians are most likely to communicate on social media about topics including political situations, Bollywood, cricket (and now a few other sports as well), technology (gadgets, phones), beauty, natural disasters and automobiles^{4&5}.

Why look at social data at all in India?

Expressions on social media are organic, being made spontaneously, by the user/consumer themselves. These are then the best source of information on the themes and topics that intrinsically engage Indians.

Is India ready for this?

According to Mary Meeker’s *Internet Usage Report 2017*⁶, the time spent on mobile by category states that entertainment is the most popular category, followed by search, social and messaging (we particularly look at all this data for social data analysis). The report shows that the younger audience is more active on social media, and there is an increasing participation seen.

The key motivations for social media usage are social networking, connecting and entertainment related. Also, an interest in sharing, asking and consuming user generated comments on products and services is seeing a surge⁷.

This social media data holds a wealth of information about what is being said about a brand; what consumers find good or bad and what functionalities and emotional aspects are catching their fancy (or not!), among others.

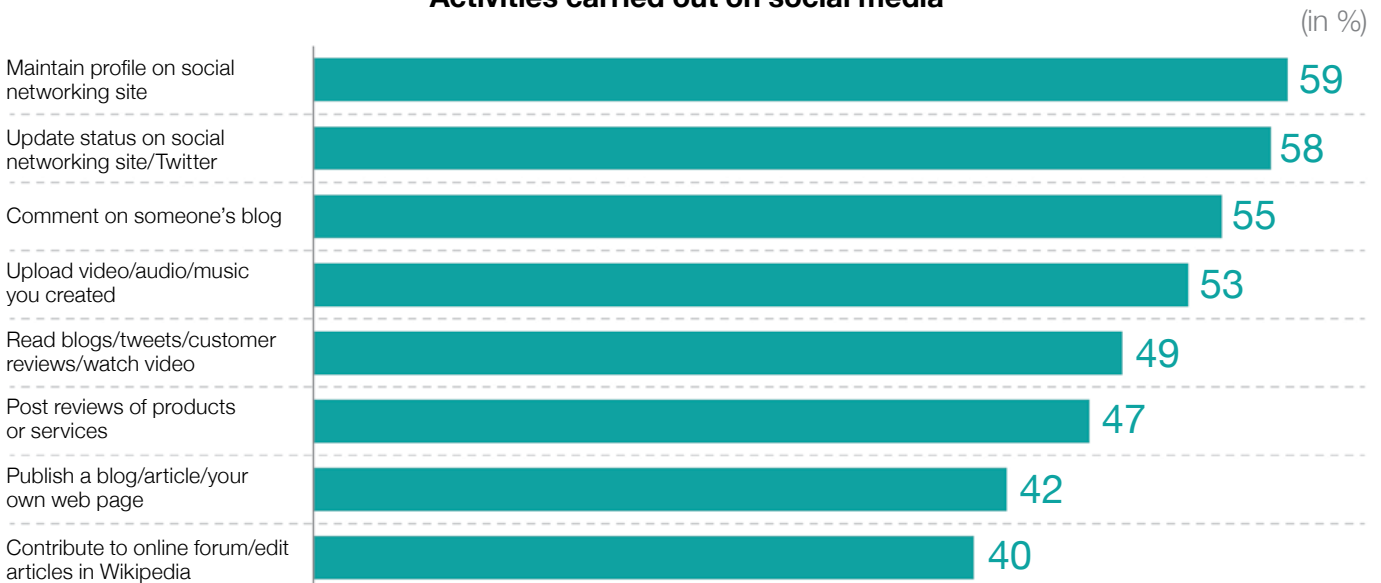
All the conversations that are happening are taking place organically, without any researcher intervention, and are a goldmine for marketers.

Evolved markets Vs. India

During our work in India, we have noticed a huge variance in social data from evolved markets Vs. India. Social data for evolved societies is superior in terms of quality and depth of responses. More than sharing of experiences and views on categories and brands, review data is available that offers real depth on features, attributes, brands and SKUs, usage and so on. This provides valuable feedback to marketers on their products and services from actual users. Deep-dive analysis of this data helps to unearth key insights.

India is a different ball game, and the depth of data can sometimes be a challenge. Twitter captures in social listening are the largest; Twitter is also largely the forum for complaints, sarcastic comments, jokes and so on. Some great discussions are taking place on Facebook, but these are behind closed groups and privacy settings, which analysts do not have access to via social listening tools. We call this “Dark Social”.

Activities carried out on social media



SOURCE: IAMAI

Categories and challenges

There are a few categories, such as beauty, cars and technology, where we see a lot of social media ‘action’ in India riding on expert reviews. We have feature based conversations, but few in-depth consumer reviews of products and services.



Below are some ideal categories to pursue UGC on social media data, as conversation volumes are higher. We have executed social intelligence projects across these categories and provided key insights to clients.

- **Beauty**

Beauty is big in India and there are several beauty bloggers and make-up artists expressing their views online. The internet is spreading awareness by providing additional access to beauty enhancement products and rituals. It has also resulted in increased consumerism, altering the definition of beauty in today’s world.

We conducted a social media study to understand the “why” of beauty for a client in the premium fragrances category. The scope involved carrying out secondary research across social media platforms and the study was part of a bigger report on decoding beauty across women through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Through social media, we discovered an overall picture of how Indian women interpret beauty and what tools they increasingly rely on for enhancing their beauty. We looked at beauty trends in terms of the past, age-old beauty rituals and the current trends in the category.

- **Automotive**

In the automotive category, the modus operandi for getting user generated content is to peer into various automobile forums where discussions are the maximum. Data is culled out from these public portals and leveraged by our analysts for research and insights generation. The key discussions are around features and reviews on new models launched (or anticipated).

- **Technology - smartphones**

Reviews on tech forums and discussions on features and brands are useful for researchers. What are consumers looking for in a mobile phone? Through forums you can check if it is the styling, colour, battery back-up, features, camera quality, sound quality, storage space etc. Recommendations, suggestions and responses from users can tell us what is working well and what isn’t. We also get interesting insights on the features of the latest launches that have struck a chord with users. In many cases, we find that the discussions on tech or software are borderless – the same forums have people from different countries chatting on the same topics, and sharing with each other.

Content – English, vernacular or both?

English content forms the largest contribution on social media and is scoured for consumer insights. Vernacular languages are growing and this growth is being monitored by social data analysts. The most widely spoken language in India is Hindi. The big social networks are starting to roll out their offerings in other Indian languages; Google now offers search in eight other Indian languages including Punjabi and Bengali, and Facebook is also available in eight languages on mobile. However, vernacular content is still in its infancy and much lower than the English content, especially UGC. English is largely used for analysis currently. The average user in India has started sharing in a multitude of regional languages and Hinglish (which is a mix of Hindi language and English language to write sentences) on social media, and many of these are written in the English script. Listening tools and text analytics platforms need to be ready in capturing and analysing data in different languages as we move forward and vernacular makes more of an impact.

on engagement metrics to gauge and monitor the effectiveness of social media campaigns⁸.

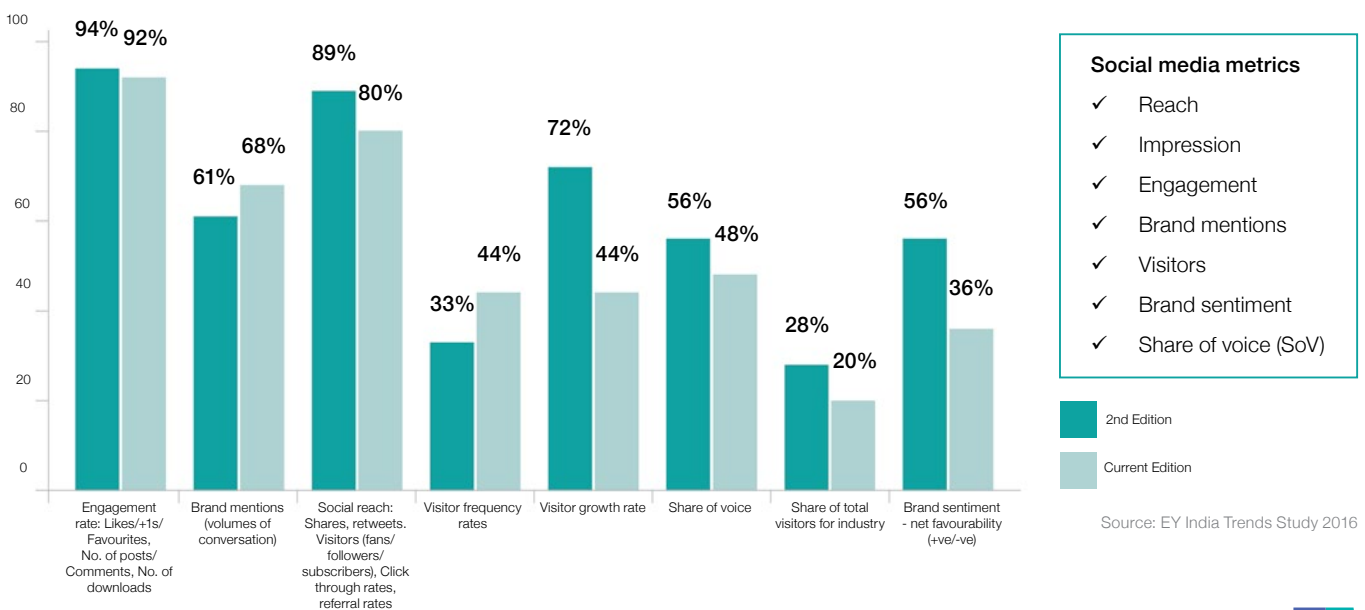
These listening tools provide reach, impression, engagement, brand mentions, visitors, brand sentiment and share of voice via an automated display analysis output.



Listening tools are used widely in India, though not for consumer research

In India, the usage of social media data is mostly dealing with social data metrics, which is derived from social listening tools. These listening tools cater to the needs of social media agencies, ad agencies and digital marketing companies in providing them with information

What do you currently measure with respect to social media?



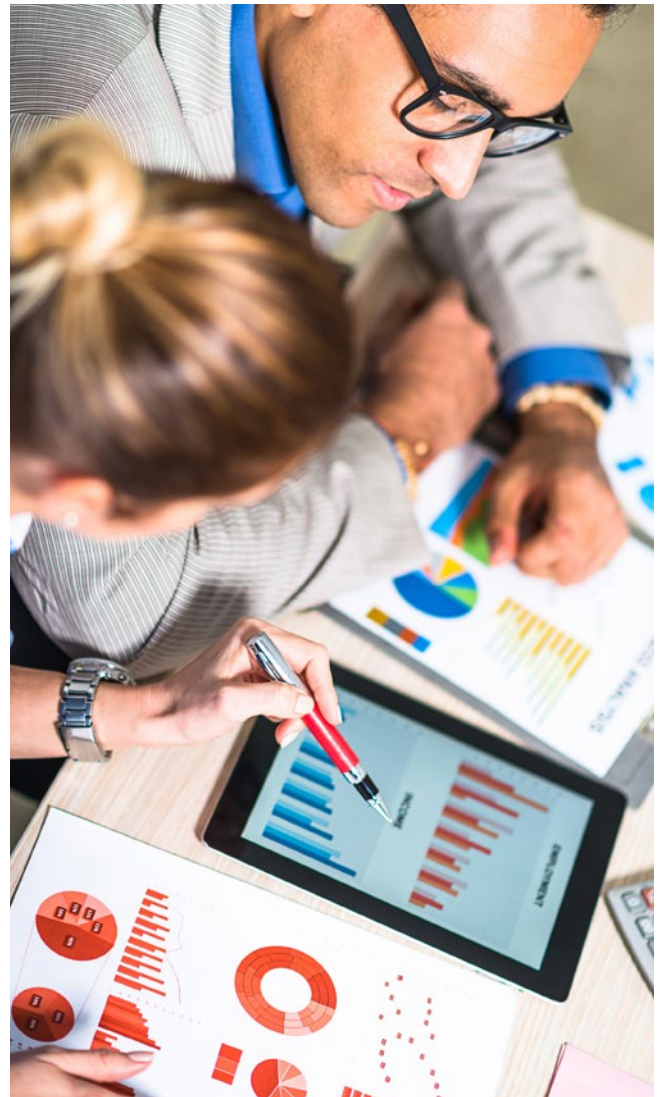


Current void and Ipsos SMX

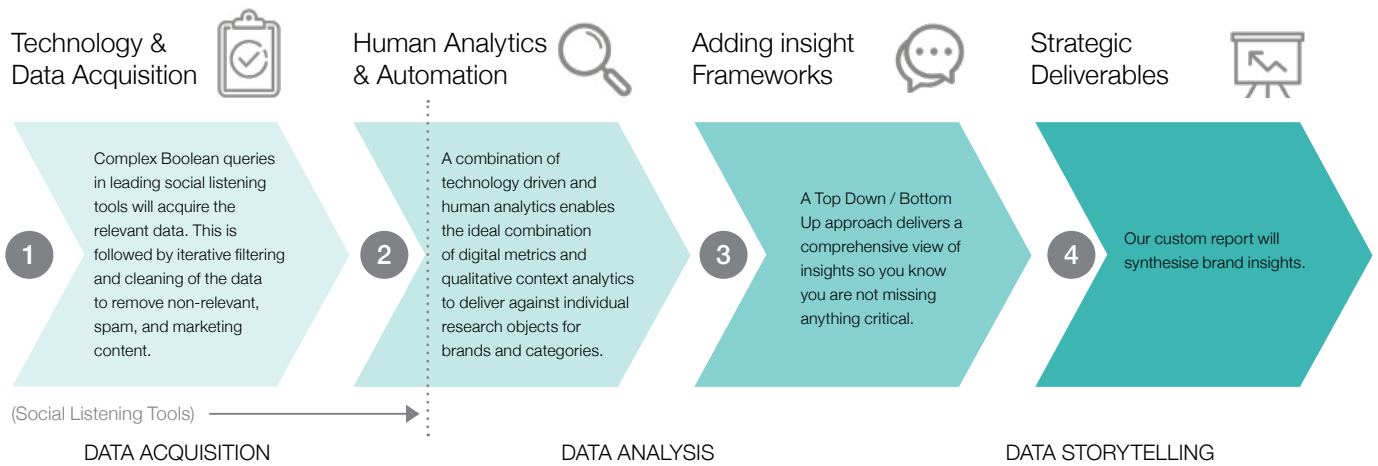
User Generated Content (UGC) has discussions, sharing of views and posts on products and services by actual users. As researchers, we are now looking at social media data as a rich source of data that is accessible to us without reaching out to our consumers. Being organic and unfiltered, this data also provides us access to thoughts and views of a target group that are difficult to get. Research agencies, boutique tech and social media agencies have started utilising social media data, but this remains quite nascent.

UGC allows us to understand consumer-brand connections in a way that is not feasible via traditional surveys. By listening to what consumers spontaneously say, we gain stronger insights into what is important to them in the category. Moreover, we can not only monitor those topics that we know are relevant to the category, but can tap into these top-of-mind associations to discover the new and important spaces that are emerging.

Ipsos SMX brings multiple expertise to the clients – including tech, tools, research analysis, and category and client perspective. From getting the relevant data, to the right tools for analysis, to further utilising frameworks to make sense of the organic data, we can bring context, hypotheses and learnings from the social media realm into the consumer research domain.



Are you using social data optimally?



So how do we do this?

- Approach for culling out relevant data: as researchers, social metrics are less important, whereas access to relevant data and extraction of it are of primary importance. We look for the relevant data sources as well, and use a social listening tool that meets all these specifications, including the approval of our social media experts.
- Approaches for analysis: a bottoms-up approach makes sense of the data we have and draws patterns and themes from it. A top-down approach looks for key factors/attributes that we are interested in for a category, brand, product, communication, and so on.
- Research frameworks: whether it's category understanding, brand equity, segmentation, our future thinking – whatever our objective is, we ensure that the social consumer research happens with the end deliverables in sight. Making sense of unstructured data using our frameworks helps integrate the findings from social with other stages of research (surveys, focus groups, etc.)
- Text analysis: this helps in structuring large volumes of unstructured data, and goes beyond using a smaller sample of data from which qualitatively insights can be generated. Text analysis helps in segregating the data into topics and sentiment. With further reading into the data, we can draw out insights based on a larger data set.

Future of social media research in India

While many clients are comfortable with the traditional forms of research, social media is now in the spotlight. The first step is to convince marketers of the merits of investing in social media research. The second challenge is the cost of listening tools and text analytics. However, their value – time efficiency, obtaining difficult-to-reach views, drawing insights to understand what is trending – can be positive for clients when the social data analysis is used in the right way. Lastly, clients often have a “social listening” function (in-house or an external agency) which they feel provides the social perspective already. It is somewhat early days, but some of the large players in the FMCG sector are investing in analysing social data in tandem with primary data acquired from other sources like consumer studies and deriving more meaningful insights.

Text analytics is an important tool in the researchers' hands as we deal with larger volumes of data. Image and video analytics will be the natural progression as social media is largely image and video driven. India is a high potential market but, at the same time, it's highly price sensitive. All tools and vendors will need to be aware of the market realities and provide cost effective solutions.

As internet penetration increases, marketers' usage of social media data will increase too. Assessing user feedback on products and services, along with having better control in managing perceptions, will be essential, while constant innovation in providing solutions that anticipate client needs will increase usage. Ipsos has an ambition to stay ahead of the curve and be at the cutting edge of combining AI and human intelligence. We can help marketers to maximise the full potential of social data, and we offer consumer insights which are both realtime and incisive. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more.

References

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4. [We Are Social](#)
5. [Adgully](#)
6. [Internet Usage Report 2017, Mary Meeker](#)
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