

SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING, MONITORING, INTELLIGENCE

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

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Social data analytics, social media research, social media listening, social media intelligence, ... those are only some of the terms used to describe social media analysis. You might understandably feel lost at times. Three terms in particular tend to stick out and are sometimes used interchangeably: **Social Media Monitoring, Listening and Intelligence**. How to be sure to use the correct wording?

1. THE EVOLUTION OF WORDINGS

For those who have tried, I am sure navigating all of this has been a confusing experience. But fret not! I am here to help. Let's first look at why there is such a variety of terms to define social media analytics.

Part of it is that truly different ways co-exist to look at the data, depending on the goal you want to achieve. But it has also a lot to do with the social listening platforms themselves, in line with advancement in technology and capacity. With this evolving all the time, so was the need to find terminology to match – and perhaps to better convey – its use.

Social media monitoring harkens back to the very beginning of the first modern social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Facebook was created in 2004 and Twitter in 2006. At this stage, any analyses done are focused on a brand own channel, collecting metrics to gauge engagement (volume of brand mentions for example). Social media monitoring is more of a reactive process. While this offers useful insights for content managers to monitor marketing campaigns performance, in terms of market research it is a superficial way at looking at social data.

Closely related, **social media listening** is a step up from social media monitoring. We, as Social Media Analysts, started looking a little more beyond metrics into the deeper meaning behind the information that was being tracked. **Social media listening** involves using tools such as sentiment analysis, identifying influencers and analysing the content of individual social media mentions. At this point, companies started having a broader view of what social media and social networks could provide not only for their own brands but also as an opportunity to gain insights into an audience at large or a competitor.

“Monitoring sees trees; listening sees the forest.”
Dan Neely, CEO of Networked Insights

Social media intelligence - often confused with social media listening - is something rather different. It is the use of social media (and other online sources) to answer a specific business question. It is therefore different in intention and broader in scope than social media listening as it can be considered a proper research practice. Like any market research study, you'll want to start with a business question to answer with the goal of resolving a problem leading into actionable insights.

2. CONFUSION REMAINS

Yet, confusion may remain when reading current definitions explained from various sources.

“One of our biggest bugbears is the misuse of terms social listening and social intelligence.”

Dr Jillian Ney The Social Intelligence Lab

3. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

There is no real right or wrong. But you need to check that you are on the same page when working in collaboration on social media “surveillance” projects.

At AplusA, we conduct projects and use social data in ways that pertain to those three related but different practices. This is not to say that one is better to the other but to highlight their differences and to make sure to understand clearly where they sit in terms of results. **Social listening projects** to follow the aftermath of a marketing campaign or the launch of a new product ; clearly the most adapted methodology to conduct projects where KPIs are used to gauge engagement online via volume of mentions and monitor reactions such as sharing, likes and dislikes. As well as having a broad view of the conversations generated or not.

However **social media intelligence** is naturally where our focus is directed when it comes to social media analytics. Projects conducted there showed that it is a formidable way to gain insights into the thoughts and emotional journey of patients in particular by going beyond dashboards and conducting deep dive qualitative analysis to contextualize and inform questions. A great example is given by our syndicated report on the emotional journey experienced by DLBCL patients.

[Find out more about Social Media Intelligence](#)

