

# Integrating Metrics Across the Marketing Curriculum: The Digital and Social Media Opportunity

Journal of Marketing Education  
2015, Vol. 37(2) 114–126  
© The Author(s) 2015  
Reprints and permissions:  
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/0273475315587103  
jmed.sagepub.com



Lisa Spiller<sup>1</sup> and Tracy Tuten<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Modern digital and social media formats have revolutionized marketing measurement, producing an abundance of data, meaningful metrics, new tools, and methodologies. This increased emphasis on metrics in the marketing industry signifies the need for increased quantitative and critical thinking content in our marketing coursework if we are to adequately prepare our students for industry needs. This article discusses the growing relevance of marketing metrics, reviews the metrics currently available for digital and social media, provides two real-world examples of organizations using digital and social media metrics to drive strategic marketing decisions (especially integrated marketing communication decisions) and offers both suggestions for how to weave more digital and social media quantitative analysis and critical thinking skills into our marketing courses and examples of student work using social media tools.

## Keywords

integrated marketing communications, digital and social media, marketing metrics, marketing measurement, critical thinking

John Wannamaker is attributed with the quote, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don’t know which half.” This well-known sentiment remains widely felt among marketers who recognize the value of assessment in guiding strategic marketing decisions. Today’s marketers have an advantage Wannamaker did not have—access to relevant data and the tools to analyze it. The marketing landscape is changing, and unlike decades ago, today’s marketing activities produce a plethora of metrics that can be measured and analyzed to produce significant strategic insight. The question is whether or not marketing students are adequately prepared to tackle the goldmine of data that are now available to them. Pilling, Rigdon, and Brightman (2012) provided evidence that marketing students generally lack this preparedness in quantitative skills. Equally important is whether or not marketing students can properly analyze the available data in such a fashion as to transform it into useable knowledge to drive strategy. Students must possess sufficient critical thinking capabilities to capitalize on the data-rich marketing activities and media formats available in today’s business world.

Modern digital and social media formats have revolutionized marketing measurement, producing an abundance of meaningful metrics, new tools, and methodologies. In fact, many organizations have gone from being starved for data to being overwhelmed by it. However, all the available data will not help marketers to do their job more effectively without a heavy dose of analysis. The fact remains that marketers still rely on solid critical thinking skills to make sense of all these data.

This increased emphasis on metrics in the marketing industry signifies the need for increased quantitative and critical thinking content in our marketing coursework if we are to adequately prepare our students for today’s and tomorrow’s work world. This article discusses this trend and phenomenon, reviews the metrics currently available with digital and social media formats, provides real-world examples of how organizations are using digital and social media metrics to drive strategic marketing decisions (especially integrated marketing communication decisions), and offers both suggestions for how to weave more digital and social media quantitative analysis and critical thinking skills into our marketing courses and examples of student work using social media tools.

## Marketing Metrics and the Digital Advantage

Marketing metrics has been defined as the tools which help companies quantify, compare, and interpret their own performance from marketing activities (Kotler & Keller, 2007). Measuring the impact of marketing activities has been on the rise as more marketers realize the strategic value the data conveys. As a discipline, marketers historically have been

<sup>1</sup>Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA, USA

<sup>2</sup>East Carolina University, Greenville, NC, USA

### Corresponding Author:

Lisa Spiller, Christopher Newport University, 1 Avenue of the Arts, Newport News, VA 23606, USA.

Email: lspiller@cnu.edu

**Table 1.** Categories of Marketing Metrics.

Financial	Nonfinancial	
	Behavioral measures	Attitudinal measures
Return on investment	Recency, Frequency, Monetary (RFM)	Sentiment
Customer lifetime value		Liking
Net present value		Loyalty
Average customer purchase		
Profitability		

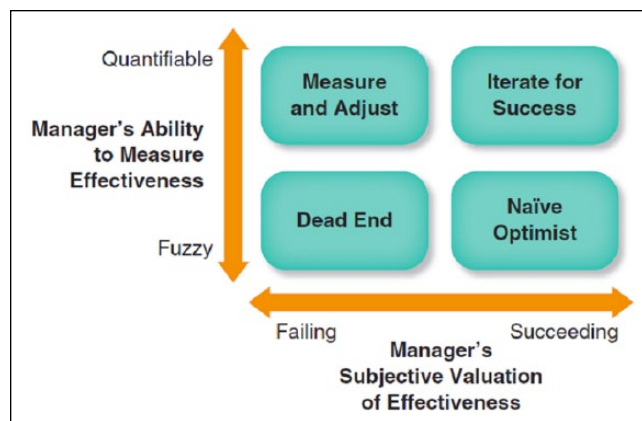
Note. Adapted from Solcansky, Sychrova, and Milichovsky (2011).

slow to embrace marketing measurement. Katie Paine, an industry leader and advocate of metrics, identified five common excuses for the failure to embrace assessment (Paine, 2012):

1. "It's too expensive."
2. "I don't know how."
3. "My program is so different it can't be measured."
4. "Public relations is squishy."
5. "There are no standard methodologies."

Despite these excuses, marketers are increasingly asked to use measurement tools to respond effectively to the changing marketing landscape. Paine (2012) pointed to social media, a global recession, and a new generation of communications managers as the three primary factors that have brought about this shift in the interest in marketing measurement. Evidence of this shift is apparent in the increase in marketing intelligence courses in marketing curricula and the identification of marketing measurement as a research priority by the Marketing Science Institute and the American Marketing Association (Azam & Qamar, 2011). The issue of measuring the effectiveness of marketing activities has also received much attention in academic literature (Azam & Qamar, 2011; Smit & Neijens, 2011; Solcansky, Sychrova, & Milichovsky, 2011; Zahay & Griffin, 2010).

Academic research studies have explored the various types of metrics that exist, providing an overview of the most important marketing metrics (Azam & Qamar, 2011). As shown in Table 1, metrics can be classified into two broad categories: financial metrics and nonfinancial metrics (Solcansky et al., 2011). Smit and Neijens (2011) detailed the metrics associated with each media format. Still, according to Azam and Qamar (2011), most marketers and marketing professors agree that there are no perfect and absolute measures available for measuring marketing success. They would also likely agree that digital and social media measurement is the specific area that needs greater exploration and use to be successful in marketing today.



**Figure 1.** The strategic options for social media measurement framework (Hoffman and Fodor, 2010).

Hoffman and Fodor (2010) created the Strategic Options for Social Media Measurement as a simple way to view the choices social media marketers make in terms of developing strategy and assessing success. It explains that social media marketers may approach measurement along a continuum of fuzzy to quantifiable and may see effectiveness along a continuum of failing to succeeding. The result of a simple matrix indicating that social media marketers may see social media as a dead end (fuzzy measures, ineffective), in need of measurement and adjustment (quantified measures, ineffective strategies), a naïve optimist (fuzzy measures, effective strategies), or as an iterative process (quantified measures, effective strategies). The framework is shown in Figure 1.

### Digital Tools Forms of Analysis

Raab (2011) claimed that savvy marketers are conducting conversation monitoring; response tracking; audience profiling, content, connection and traffic analyzing; and much more. Each of these applications has associated metrics that offer excellent measurement and analysis opportunities for marketers. Digital and social media tools are widely available to count the number of brand or product mentions, track conversations around a brand or topic, and create word clouds of the results. With the use of digital tools, marketers have access to logs of site activity data and behavioral patterns associated with web activity, even beyond the owned site. Social media sites store vast amounts of behavioral data and user-generated content which may be available for analysis. Furthermore, many social media channel providers such as Facebook and YouTube offer analytics reporting for pages.

Though the sheer number of individual metrics relevant to digital and social media marketers can be overwhelming, they can be categorized by type: activity metrics, interaction metrics, and return (financial) metrics. Activity metrics are

**Table 2.** Digital and Social Media Metrics.

Category	Exemplar measures	Interpretation
Activity	Number, frequency, and recency of Blog posts Updates/posts Comments/reply comments White papers Photo posts Video posts Tweets Pins Tags Activity in number of media	Measures of the input the brand is making into developing a digital/social presence
Interaction	Number, frequency, and recency of Registrations Bookmarks/favorites/likes/ratings Comments/posts/mentions/tags Links/trackbacks Downloads/installs/embeds Subscriptions Fans/followers/friends Share/forward/invite/refer Reviews/testimonials Traffic/visits/views/impressions Time spent on site Profile development User-generated content contributed Discount/deal redemption rate Echo effect/virality Sentiment	Measures of customer engagement with the brand's digital and social presence; indicators suggest various forms of response from the target audience; beyond basic responsiveness, indicators may also suggest influence beyond the initial target audience to customers' social graph
Return	Cost/prospects Lead conversion rate Average new revenue per customer Customer lifetime value Earned media values Shifts in average sales/site traffic/search engine ratings Share of voice Return on investment	Measures indicate the outcome of the digital and social strategies and tactics and illustrate the financial value of the actions taken

Note. Adapted from Brown (2010) and Tuten and Solomon (2015).

input focused, interaction metrics are process focused, return metrics are outcome focused. Table 2 provides examples of some of the most commonly used digital and social media marketing metrics in each category.

Activity metrics measure the actions the organization takes relative to social media. For instance, an organization might set goals in terms of the number and timing of blog

posts, white papers, tweets, videos, comment responses, and status updates it may contribute in social venues. Interaction metrics focus on how the target market engages with the digital channels and social media activities. According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB, 2009), engagement measurement is the most critical assessment component for digital and social campaigns. Interaction measures include

the number of links and backlinks, followers and fans, comments, likes, recommendations and reviews and the amount of shared content. Interactions are essentially composed of all the ways in which users can participate in a social media relationship with the brand. These measures may also be specific to the form of social media being used by the brand and the type of participation warranted. For instance, the IAB recommends including metrics for conversation size and relevance, content freshness, and author credibility.

Return metrics focus on the outcomes (financial or otherwise) that directly or indirectly support the success of the brand. They include return on investment (ROI) measures, cost reduction measures, and other performance metrics. While the most common return metric is ROI, there are other return measures relevant for digital and social media marketers including return on impressions, return on digital impact, and return on earned media (Likely, Rockland, & Weiner, 2006; Tuten & Solomon, 2015). The return on impressions model measure demonstrates how many media impressions were generated by the digital and social media tactics used. Return on social media impact promises to determine how sales can be attributed to each element in a marketing mix and for tactics within the social media advertising strategy. Content generation and consumption is tracked and assigned algorithm scores to dictate weight of relative influence. Return on earned media is based on the use of advertising equivalency value (AEV) as a metric. Advertising equivalency value is used primarily to equate publicity in news media outlets to its paid advertising equivalent. To calculate advertising equivalency, the cost to purchase a display ad on a site would be used to assign a dollar value to the impressions achieved because of buzz and word-of-mouth communication online.

These data sources are valuable for marketers who understand their relevance, availability and use, but their value can be further enhanced when combined with qualitative data. Again, this is possible via traditional qualitative methods but can also be achieved through user behavior and content analysis. Mancuso and Stuth (2011) recommended the merging of the quantitative data provided by digital and social media with more qualitative research methodologies. They argued that researchers using qualitative methodologies can directly pose focused questions as to “how” and “why” target market segment members might behave or think, and with greater on-the-spot, drill-down opportunities than are currently afforded through social media channels (Mancuso & Stuth, 2011).

### **Leveraging Digital and Social Media Metrics in Marketing Education**

While all the social media tools have their own distinct features and selling points, there is one constant among them regardless of which tool is used, and that is that the tools are

only as good as the individual running them (Thomas, 2009). As Thomas (2009) rightly claimed, the real task lies in making sense of the information retrieved—a human brain is needed to mine and analyze the data to determine sentiment, topic aggregation, information flow, source of opinion, trends, competitive association, and geography. As educators, we are therefore tasked with not only ensuring that marketing students are competent in measurement and analytics across the marketing mix but also emphasizing the role of critical thinking in the application and decision making flowing from the analysis.

According to national surveys, employers want new hires who can write coherently, think creatively, and analyze quantitative data (Glenn, 2011). Although numerous studies have been published on the critical thinking skills needed to analyze quantitative data in business in general (Celuch & Slama, 1998; Edison & Geissler, 2010; Gremler, Hoffman Keaveney, & Wright, 2000; Hopkins, Raymond, & Carlson, 2011), far fewer studies appear on critical thinking when applied to marketing problems. Beyond that, even fewer academic studies address teaching quantitative methods in marketing courses, although some researchers have documented the challenges associated with teaching marketing metrics to college students (Saber & Foster, 2011).

According to Glenn (2011), most people believe that accounting and finance are where the hard work happens in the business school classrooms, unlike the soft subjects of management and marketing. This statement implies that marketing courses are more qualitative in substance than are accounting and finance courses. Although that may have been true years ago, it is hardly correct in today’s marketing world. Most marketing activities in today’s business world are considered “direct or interactive” and employ digital and social media strategies in which quantitative measurement is a necessity. The question is whether or not our college marketing courses are keeping up-to-date and teaching the relevant quantitative concepts and metrics needed for the marketing profession.

An empirical study of 259 business professors reported by Glenn (2011) found that on average, these professors had reduced the math and analytic-thinking requirements in their courses over the years. As educators, this is clearly the wrong direction. College business professors, especially marketing professors, need to spend more time on quantitative methods and metrics to adequately prepare our students for career success. Business students must be held individually accountable for learning and applying quantitative methods, and the manner by which professors assess student learning should not be based on team projects and cases alone. Academic research has demonstrated that when students are placed on team projects, students will divide the tasks according to their respective comfort zones—the math whiz will tackle the statistical work, while the English buff will write the paper (Glenn, 2011). Therefore, team projects and cases

alone are not sufficient teaching methods to ensure that students master marketing metrics.

Limited research has been published offering professors' advice on "how to" infuse more marketing metrics and measurement topics into marketing courses, although this is a topic on which additional research is clearly warranted. Currently, there is a scarcity of pedagogical studies investigating the development of analytical skills of undergraduate marketing students despite the importance placed on such skill sets.

One research study investigated ways to implement marketing metrics into the marketing curriculum on a course-by-course basis, including principles of marketing, product management, promotional methods, logistics/supply-chain and marketing capstone courses (Beauchamp & Bobbitt, 2010). This article detailed the various metrics that ought to be covered in each course. For example, metrics such as brand premium, brand development index, market penetration, and rate of cannibalization should be taught in a product management course (Beauchamp & Bobbitt, 2010). Dickson (2009) presented and discussed an excellent online tool to teach marketing accounting metrics (<http://mametrics.ca>) which includes eight Excel spreadsheets containing marketing metric calculations, embedded text and practice problems, a 32-page primer of metric topics, PowerPoint presentations, and a sample examination. Another pedagogical study discussed how one marketing department of a large business school introduced a new undergraduate course, *Marketing Metrics and Analysis*, to address the current lack of quantitative knowledge and skills of marketing students (Saber & Foster, 2011). The article went on to report on the empirical assessment results and course modifications that were made to improve the teaching of marketing metrics, and the need for additional examination of the long-term learning impact of the new metrics course. Pilling et al. (2012) shared the development of a cornerstone course on marketing intelligence. More recently, Shanda, Asamoah, and Ponna (2013) reviewed several tools relevant for teaching business analytics including the value of Teradata University Network ([www.teradatauniversitynetwork.com](http://www.teradatauniversitynetwork.com)). All these studies demonstrate how metrics can be incorporated into marketing courses. However, none of these studies address digital and social media metrics.

### *Weaving Digital and Social Metrics Into the Marketing Curriculum*

At least anecdotally it seems that many business programs are dealing with the need to teach marketing metrics by offering a dedicated course in marketing intelligence or marketing metrics. However, the availability of data and tools from social media resources suggests that we can potentially integrate metrics across the marketing curriculum. Naturally, as previously addressed by Beauchamp and Bobbit (2010)

**Table 3.** Digital Opportunities for Marketing Educators.

Digital and social media opportunity	Type of analytics
Mametrics.ca	Marketing accounting tutorials
MBTN—Management by the Numbers	Marketing and management metrics simulation
Teradata University	Marketing metrics and data analysis
Google Online Marketing Challenge	Online advertising measurement
Hootsuite University	Social media analytics
Google Analytics	Online tracking measurement
Hubspot Academy	Tutorials including social media analytics

the coverage of quantitative concepts in the marketing curriculum vary, depending on the marketing course. For example, most marketing research courses will include a heavy dose of descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses; while case-based marketing strategy courses normally address a wider variety of measurement topics, such as break-even, ROI, cost per response, and market penetration analysis.

Theoretically, most direct and interactive marketing courses address measurement in great detail, as it is a fundamental criterion of what makes the marketing activity or advertisement qualify as "direct or interactive marketing" or "direct response." The word "measurable" is normally included in most definitions of direct marketing. Therefore, these courses normally include testing or experimentation, hypothesis testing, response rate analysis and customer relationship analyses metrics, and a whole host of other measurement tactics. For example, integrated marketing courses would surely address promotional budgeting, reach, frequency, and campaign analysis. Database marketing courses should delve into the measurements of customer value, customer lifetime value, database lift, and predictive modeling. However, each course topic may involve many metrics. For example, customer lifetime value uses average sales dollars, cost of goods sold, retention rates, marketing expense, the present value of money and others—to calculate the profit you will realize on the average new customer over time.

Some institutions have introduced dedicated courses in digital marketing and/or social media marketing courses into their offerings. In such cases, measurement and metrics are components of the assessment modules of those courses, including ongoing digital and social promotions and campaign assessment. There are a number of digital opportunities for marketing educators to expose their students to digital and social media metrics. Table 3 provides a listing of such opportunities.



**Table 4.** Digital and Social Media Metric Exercises and Assignments for Marketing Courses.

Marketing course	Relevant digital and social metrics	Class exercises/assignments
Principles of Marketing	<p><i>Activity metrics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media mix allocations</li> <li>• Frequency of likes, shares, links, comments, or posts</li> <li>• Sentiment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure the effort a company is making to establish a digital and social media presence by visiting its website and social media sites and evaluating the frequency and recency of links, likes, posts, and so on.</li> <li>• Assess the number of social media formats used by a company or brand and determine if other formats might be effectively used to engage its customers.</li> <li>• Analyze a sample of comments shared in social sites and identify the marketing opportunities related to the comments.</li> <li>• Analyze the reviews for products on sites like Amazon and identify suggestions for new product development based on the comments.</li> </ul>
Marketing Research	<p><i>Interaction metrics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of likes, shares, links, comments, or posts</li> <li>• Response tracking</li> <li>• Traffic analyzing</li> <li>• Audience profiling</li> <li>• Social mention measures</li> <li>• Measures of brand strength, sentiment, passion, and reach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the content of social media posts on various social media formats for a particular national brand, and create a word cloud to report the results.</li> <li>• Analyze the content types (text, photo, and video) for posts on the Facebook pages of two different national brands and draw conclusions as to the effectiveness of content types in obtaining consumer response and engagement.</li> </ul>
Consumer Behavior	<p><i>Interaction metrics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response tracking</li> <li>• Behavioral pattern evaluating</li> <li>• Audience profiling</li> <li>• Measures of brand strength, sentiment, passion, and reach</li> <li>• Customer value and customer lifetime value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain permission to follow three people in social space and measure their social activity to determine their social persona. Make marketing recommendations regarding the social motives of these individuals.</li> <li>• Measure the consumer responses (likes, comments, and shares) to the Facebook pages of different national brands and determine the consumers' motives to interact with the brand's social media site.</li> </ul>
Marketing Strategy	<p><i>Return metrics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media engagement</li> <li>• Social media mix analysis</li> <li>• Cost/benefit evaluation</li> </ul> <p>Return on advertising investment (ROAI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a strategic analysis (including a cost/benefit evaluation) of the social media mix of a local small business and provide strategic recommendations regarding which social media formats should be prioritized and/or eliminated on the basis of return on advertising investment (ROAI).</li> <li>• Case analyses (see Exhibit I for case examples).</li> </ul>
Advertising/Integrated Marketing Communications	<p><i>Interaction and return metrics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand posts or mentions</li> <li>• Conversation tracking or monitoring</li> <li>• Online and offline brand consistency evaluation</li> <li>• Traffic analyzing</li> <li>• Content analyzing</li> <li>• Brand engagement measuring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze and measure a brand's social media presence by calculating both the brand's Klout score and its presence on Social Mention.</li> <li>• Compare brand messages presented in all marketing communication materials—online and offline—for a local small business and determine the level of brand consistency.</li> <li>• Evaluate and compare the content of brand posts for a particular national brand to determine its brand image on select social media formats.</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 4. (continued)**

Marketing course	Relevant digital and social metrics	Class exercises/assignments
Personal Selling/Sales Management	<p><i>Activity, Interaction, and return metrics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social mention measures</li> <li>• Online lead generation</li> <li>• Shares or viral word-of-mouth referrals</li> <li>• Conversion rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the different lead generating approaches used by companies in various social media channels and draw conclusions as to the effectiveness in generating sales revenue.</li> <li>• Evaluate the process by which companies can track and measure conversion rates and make recommendations as to enhance their sales techniques.</li> </ul>

In digital marketing courses, students may participate in programs such as the Google Online Marketing Challenge (see [www.google.com/onlinechallenge](http://www.google.com/onlinechallenge)), for which teams develop an online marketing campaign using Google AdWords. Ongoing assessment and tactical revisions are a core part of the project, ensuring that students learn the value of control functions in optimizing an online campaign. Professors may also use online client-based projects with a specific evaluation function. For social media marketing courses, there are similar industry-sponsored opportunities for students to participate in active learning exercises, including those offered by HootSuite and Hubspot. HootSuite University's Higher Education Program provides professors and students a 90-day access to its premium service, HootSuite Pro, and its online training program in social media marketing. HootSuite Pro includes an analytics dashboard, enabling professors to incorporate measurement of course activities into course requirements. As the industry continues to develop, other digital services may offer universities access to industry tools and current data.

A limitation, however, is that digital marketing and social media marketing courses are not yet widely available and, when offered, are likely offered as electives. Given the value of enhanced metrics coverage for marketing students, marketing educators should consider adding digital and social metrics coverage where applicable in required courses such as principles of marketing, marketing research, consumer behavior, and marketing strategy. Electives such as advertising or integrated marketing communications and selling or sales management courses are excellent potential targets for enhanced metrics content. In weaving digital and social media marketing metrics into our marketing courses, as in other courses, it is necessary to match the metrics to the course objectives and content. Table 4 provides a brief overview of how digital and social media metrics can be infused into various marketing courses by way of class activities and exercises.

For example, in selling and sales management, online lead generation is of growing relevance and an objective which can easily use activity, interaction, and return metrics.

Customer relationship management uses digital tools, including e-mail and social networks, among other digital tools and is an appropriate course for teaching interaction and return metrics. Business-to-consumer companies have found social networks like Twitter a powerful service recovery channel, making services marketing a good match for teaching metrics related to customer lifetime value and turnover.

Last, marketing strategy has consistently served as a capstone course with the most emphasis on measurement and metrics. These metrics should be tied into cases in this course as relevant. At present, there may be limited cases with sufficient digital/social strategies to make possible significant analysis using these metrics but this should change over time. Ideally, students will be introduced to digital and social media marketing strategies and their related metrics in principles, study-specific strategies, and metrics through their coursework. Marketing strategy would then serve as the capstone for digital and social metrics as it does for the other most prevalent marketing metrics.

Since most marketing strategy courses tend to be case-based analytical courses, incorporating real-world applications and using cases based on real-world marketing problems is one innovative solution to provide students with hands-on experience with marketing metrics. Cases can be written on local small businesses or entrepreneurs and can contain a variety of strategic challenges where analytical and critical thinking skills need to be applied in order to provide strategic recommendations. Exhibit 1 provides examples of two real-world cases that have been created and used to challenge students to critically analyze associated digital and social media concepts and metrics. The cases are examples of real-world companies that are employing digital and social media metrics. The examples are provided to help us understand how different types of organizations are using digital and social media metrics and the purposes or benefits associated with the measurements. The cases also discuss the challenges associated with capitalizing on the available digital and social media metrics along with critical thinking skills that are used when using the metrics to drive marketing decisions.

**Exhibit I. Real-World Case Examples.****Example 1: A Small Entrepreneurial Chain Store Operation with Four Retail Outlets**

The company has been in business for 10 years and is a member of two social networks: FaceBook and LinkedIn. The marketing director is not interested in joining Twitter because she believes the demographic profile of the company's average customer does not match the younger Twitter member profile. Beyond that, monitoring the social networks and providing timely replies to members in the two social networks with which the company is currently active, is a labor-intensive activity. For a small business, social network monitoring and communicating requires a good deal of both human and budget resources.

The company has a full-time associate (Megan) employed as the web and social media specialist, who handles the social network monitoring and online communications on a daily basis. Megan estimates that she spends one to two hours each day monitoring and replying in the two social networks. Sometimes, Megan is required to conduct research to investigate a given situation or topics before she can provide an adequate and accurate reply. On a regular basis, Megan searches for any comments about her company on websites such as "socialmention.com" and uses Google Analytics and landing page measurements as well.

Megan summarizes the social network activity and creates a summary report on a monthly basis. Through the years, the company has not had many negative comments. However, if and when it does have one, Megan will construct a reply as soon as possible to address the concern. The goal is to capitalize on the complaint and turn it into a positive before it has the chance to go viral.

When this small business first became active on social networks, its goal was to obtain the maximum quantity of followers possible. However, this policy has changed as the marketing team soon realized that it is "quality" of followers, not quantity that matters. The company wants to reach people who are engaged with its brand—people who will convert to a customer at one of its four retail store locations. The trend and type of measurement conducted by the company has evolved over the past three years. In 2009, when the company first joined the two social networks, it began with no followers whatsoever. This quickly changed as the company began promoting its FaceBook page and providing incentives for people to visit, join their network, and "like" them. The first social media measurements were taken of the number of fans and a profile of those fans.

*(continued)***Exhibit I. (continued)**

The second phase of social media measurement entailed tracking conversion rates between social network members and retail store customers. Most of the conversion tracking was implemented by direct response advertisements, containing call-to-actions such as: "Mention our FB page and receive a 10% discount." The third and current phase is measuring posts that feature specific products and calculating correlations between product sales and product posts. Measurements of product sales are taken both "before" and "after" the product post.

The challenges associated with all of the metrics available for social media include:

- There is almost too much data and too much to look at.
- In addition, every media format has its own measurement criteria, yet the goal should be the same—to drive retail sales. Must know the media along with its many different forms.
- There must be contingency plans in place for negative comments or remarks.
- To obtain more precise tracking of conversion rates.

Case questions:

1. How would you advise Megan to track conversion rates on the company's social media sites?
2. What factors should Megan measure in comparing its social media presence and engagement with that of its closest competitors?
3. How might the company enhance its social media marketing efforts?

**Example 2: An Independent, Family-Owned and Run Holistic Spa Facility**

The company has been in business for two years and actively uses its own website, Facebook and Living Social as promotional tools. The owner has focused on keeping the number of communication channels manageable. She believes that for a small facility with limited capacity word-of-mouth communication by current clients will be the best possible tool for growth. The owner is assisted by her daughter who is also a licensed aesthetician and who manages the digital communication channels for the facility.

The website is a fairly simple structure including an "about us" page, a contact form and pages detailing the importance of holistic skin care and the services offered. The owner's daughter updates the site and interprets the

*(continued)*



**Exhibit 1. (continued)**

Google Analytics reports on the site, including traffic to the various pages, time spent on pages and return traffic. For now, all bookings are made via telephone but a reservation system may be implemented in the future.

The business has developed an active Facebook page for communicating with fans, offering promotions and building credibility as an expert in the area of holistic skin care. Facebook serves as the facility's primary customer relationship management tool for the time being. The Facebook page is updated daily by the owner's daughter. Thus far, the Facebook page has minimal comments and requires little time beyond the provision of the day's chosen content. Note: As the business grows in reputation, this time commitment will likely increase.

The facility has also used several Living Social and Groupon deals quite effectively. Living Social and Groupon are group-buying services that fall under the social commerce component of social media marketing. These services allow the facility to target a specific geographic area with a sales promotion offer designed to increase demand for specific services at a discount. With careful planning, the offer is able to cover the facility's cost and offer a small profit margin. The facility has used these deals to increase brand awareness, increase demand overall, encourage service trial for specific services offered, and encourage repeat business (by offering a follow-up promotion of a repeat visit at the deal price).

For each deal the facility considers offering, an analysis is undertaken on the effectiveness of the previous deals in order to make adjustments prior to launching a new Living Social or Groupon offer. Specifically, activity, interaction, and return metrics are utilized. The facility assesses the number of deals purchased and redeemed, as well as the number and amounts of up-selling per deal customer and number of deal customers who booked a service following use of the deal. Living Social and Groupon both offer analytics to clients, including the number of deals shared with a viewer's network and amount of time spent viewing the deal. The facility also monitors the Facebook page during deal offers to identify increases in likes and comments. Finally, return metrics are applied to assess whether the deal met the facility's goals for break-even on cost and increases in return visits and demand for specific services.

(continued)

**Exhibit 1. (continued)**

As a relatively new small business, its initial priority was to drive awareness and bookings into the facility. As it has grown, it has used similar tactics to drive interest in new services as they are added into the facility's service line. While many small businesses have found success in the sales of group deals via services like Groupon but struggled to meet the subsequent demand and/or profitability objectives, this facility has been able to use group deal services repeatedly to ensure its facility is consistently operating at capacity while introducing its new services and encouraging trial. In its next phase of digital marketing, it will focus on the value of word-of-mouth communication from current customers. Doing so, will involve finding engagement tactics to employ on its Facebook page and the measurement of Facebook activity including number of fans; sharing behaviors and interaction on the site; and sentiment analysis on Facebook and possibly on other websites as well.

Case questions:

1. What specific metrics should be used to assess the effectiveness of the online coupon offers currently used by the Spa?
2. What customer engagement tactics might be employed to encourage online referrals?
3. How would you assess the effectiveness of those tactics?
4. How might the Spa enhance its social media marketing efforts?

Exhibit 1 also provides a description of the various lessons to be learned as these cases highlight the role digital and social metrics play in refining marketing strategy and tactics. Professors oftentimes use such real-world examples in the form of cases and class projects to teach the core principles in various marketing courses. Such examples are effective in making abstract and challenging concepts more concrete and can also aid in ensuring coverage of the most current issues facing marketers.

To share the kind of work which can be produced using some of the digital and social media analytical tools described in this article, Exhibit 2 provides an example of a student analysis of Caldera Spas. Students were challenged to utilize one or more free tools like Klout and Social Mention to assess a brand's presence in the market. Students were then able to tackle common business needs like competitive analysis, customer service concerns, and brand associations. In Exhibit 2, the student assessed brand associations for Caldera Spas and its primary competitor.

**Exhibit 2.** Caldera Spa Case Analysis Example.

Caldera Spas is the second of the brands Watkins makes and sells and has been given a great deal of resources and attention in the past three years to grow it to compete with its sister brand, Hot Spring Spas. Watkins as a company focuses much more heavily than its competitors on social media and Internet development, for itself and its customers. Using Social Mention, one of the free social media listening tools, four metrics of engagement were assessed (Smallbiztrends.com, 2014). They were strength, sentiment, passion and reach.

Caldera's Sentiment score was 14:1. Sentiment is the ratio of mentions that are generally positive to those that are generally negative (Socialmention.com, 2014). In this case, 14 mentions were positive, 100 were neutral and one was negative. Hot Spring Spas, Caldera's sister brand, has a sentiment score of 80:1. This much higher score is a result of thousands of more customers spreading positive word-of-mouth communication. Hot Spring Spas has 850,000 customers versus the 200,000 or so attributable to Caldera.

Also measured was the likelihood that the brand was being discussed in social media. This is labeled as the strength of the brand, here 1% and represents the specific phrase mentions over the past 24 hours divided by the total possible mentions. This lower strength score is an indication of the weakness of this brand, at a moment in time, versus other brands as well as Hot Spring Spas which has a strength score of 3%.

The third measure of brand engagement discussed here is passion. In this metric, Caldera holds its own against all comers. Passion is a measure of the likelihood that individuals talking about your brand will do so repeatedly. For example, if you have a small group of very passionate advocates who talk about your products or brand all the time, you will have a higher passion score. Conversely if every mention is written by a different author you will have a lower score (Socialmention.com). Caldera's score here was 46%, compared with 42% for Hot Spring and 66% for another competitor, Bullfrog Spas.

Lastly, Social Mention looked at the reach of the brand. Reach is simply the number of unique authors referencing your brand divided by the total number of mentions. Caldera's reach was 18%, Hot Spring's 22 and Bullfrog's 14. As with all metrics, it is important to look behind the numbers. Reach is important because you need to know that you have many, many brand ambassadors, and potential customers, and not just a few loud voices. That's what reach shows.

(continued)

**Exhibit 2. (continued)**

Finally, a competitor, Bullfrog Spas, is assessed because it is an up and comer in the spa industry with a unique selling proposition. The following list of top keywords used from Social Mention in searching both Caldera Spas and Bullfrog Spas shows the difference in the marketing messages sent out by Caldera Spas—pure, style, interactive, design as examples with fewer words related to parts like “filter,” and the messages sent out by Bullfrog Spas which are primarily technical—pleatco, cartridge, replacement, jetpack. Caldera's tag line is “Come to Life.” Bullfrog's tag line is “Perfected.”

Caldera key words: spas, tubs, pure, style, interactive, design, filter, launches, massage\*

Bullfrog key words: spas, cartridge, pleatco, replacement, long, island, company, jetpak, patio\*

Exhibit 3 provides a similar analysis for a regional campaign designed to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation. As in Exhibit 2, the task was to assess the outcomes of a real situation using free social media tools. In this example, the student chose to apply the DATA (Define–Assess–Track–Adjust) approach to analyze the digital and social media metrics of a real-world marketing case.

**Exhibit 3.** Make-A-Wish Foundation Case Analysis Example.

Makeawirelesswish.com

In the beginning of April, A Wireless–Verizon Premium Retail Stores is determined to raise \$15,000 for the Make A Wish (MAW) organization. The goal is to send 2 Pitt county families to Walt Disney World for a week vacation. Last year was the first year something like this was done and more than \$10,000 was raised. I had a flyer made and we decided to make it similar to a raffle, with the winner of the raffle receiving a brand new iPad Air. At that time, we had 1,671 likes on our Facebook page. With more than 250 stores, I am confident we can build our likes on Facebook significantly in the coming months. So for the first task of social media for my new position I decided to run a campaign promoting our Make-A-Wish raffle on Facebook. Here were our SMART goals . . .

- Specific—Make a flyer promoting the Make-A-Wish information, including the raffle for a free iPad Air. Post it on Facebook, Twitter and email.
- Measurable—Our current likes are 1,671 of Facebook and 32 on Twitter. When we launched the Facebook promotion there was \$240 raised for MAW.

(continued)

**Exhibit 3. (continued)**

- **Appropriate**—The two families are right here in the county of our corporate office. It is a wonderful organization and it also helps with A Wireless philanthropy goals.
- **Realistic**—Last year was the first year hosting this type of fundraiser and they did just over \$10,000. The company has grown quite a bit in the last year; therefore it's expected to achieve this goal.
- **Time-oriented**—There is a 2 month time limit on this.

Until now, A Wireless has not used the paid advertising option on Facebook. Using the DATA approach, I will gather all the information and explain to my boss why using the paid advertising on Facebook was a good idea or not.

**\*Define**—the results that the program is designed to promote.

Ultimately our goal for the Make-A-Wish (MAW) campaign was two-fold. We are looking to grow our social media fan base as well as reach our donations goal of \$15,000. We want them to like our Facebook page, then click on the link and support our cause by donating money. Gaining in either of the two goals is a success.

**\*Assess**—the costs of the program and the potential value of the results.

Considering this is the first time the company and I have used the paid advertisement that Facebook offers, it is important we understand how it works to know if this will be an effective form of advertisement for us. We have decided to use \$100 for our first go around. This decision came because we felt that going too low would not give us enough feedback and going too high may prove to be a costly mistake. I don't have enough information at this time to know what the cost of gaining or losing a customer is at this time, but this is a low risk campaign.

**\*Track**—the actual results and link those results to the program.

This is where the Facebook Analysis comes in handy. From 3/14 to 4/8 our average reach was 460. When we posted our flyer for the first time on 4/9 we reached 2,200. However, when we paid the \$100 and posted the same flyer between 4/10 and 4/16 our reach jumped to 22,800, which is an average of 3,800 a day. In regards to "Likes", between 4/1 and 4/9 we gained 9 new likes to our page (all organic). When our paid post hit between 4/10 and 4/16 we gained a total of 487 new likes and lost only 21. That's a little more than \$2 per like (In this instance). We gained a total of \$260 on our Make A Wish site, however we informed many people of our cause.

(continued)

**Exhibit 3. (continued)**

**\*Adjust**—the program based on results to optimize future outcomes.

Considering this is our first go around with the paid advertisement, there's a ton of room to grow. I did the Marketing for Chick-fil-A for 2 years and only looked at our Facebook analysis once (and we had over 3000 likes!). I look forward to trying this on a product promotion to see if it will be the same outcome. I also need to learn more about what the company actually wants and what it's worth to them to get it. This was a great learning experience for me and I trust it will be beneficial to my boss when I bring in all the information I learned from this class.

The final case example provided in Exhibit 4 demonstrates how students can measure an organization's social media presence by calculating the organization's Klout score, a measure of influence in social media networks, along with the organization's presence on Social Mention. As in the previous two examples, the student was asked to assess a brand's competitive presence using free social media tools. This particular case example investigates the Charlotte Bobcats sports team.

**Exhibit 4. Charlotte Bobcats Case Analysis Example.**

Founded in 2004, the Bobcats are the NBA's youngest franchise. The team was granted to the Charlotte region to replace the previous franchise, the Hornets, who moved to New Orleans in 2002 after 14 seasons in Charlotte. Despite the fact that the Bobcats franchise is owned by NBA legend Michael Jordan in a basketball-crazy town, the team has had relatively little success on the court. In ten years of existence, the team has qualified for the NBA's postseason tournament twice, in 2010 and 2014.

However, there are signs that professional basketball in Charlotte is on the upswing. Led by young talent, this year's team posted a winning record and qualified for the playoffs for only the second time in ten years. Additionally, the New Orleans franchise chose to relinquish the Hornets nickname and adopt a name more representative of the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana. When New Orleans's club changed its team name, Charlotte sports fans put pressure on the Bobcats leadership to make a push to reclaim the Hornets name. After several years of pressure, Jordan announced that the Hornets nickname and the iconic teal and purple color scheme would be returning to Charlotte starting with the 2014-2015 NBA season. Charlotte's support of the

(continued)

**Exhibit 4. (continued)**

original Hornets team was unparalleled: the franchise led the league in attendance for many years and posted 364 consecutive sellouts (this translates to about 8.27 seasons of home basketball games, not counting playoff games). Additionally, the name is historically important to the region and the State of North Carolina as during the Revolutionary War, British General Cornwallis described the Charlotte region as a “hornets nest of rebellion.”

To analyze the Bobcats social media presence, I looked at two things: the team’s Klout score and the team’s presence on SocialMention. Klout analyzes social media presences and assigns a score between 1 and 100 to each presence. From Klout: “In determining the user score, Klout measures the size of a user’s social media network and correlates the content created to measure how other users interact with that content.” The Bobcats have a respectable Klout score of 88. To gauge this score, I took a look at the Klout scores of the team’s five southeastern division rivals. The Atlanta Hawks have a Klout score of 90, the Miami Heat have a Klout score of 92, the Orlando Magic have a Klout score of 89, and the Washington Wizards have a Klout score of 90. The Bobcats have the lowest Klout score out of their division rivals, but there is not a large range between the division’s lowest and highest Klout scores.

Another important fact to consider is Miami’s star player, LeBron James. While I would venture that the vast majority of teams gain their fans based on pride in one’s hometown or current city, some players transcend regions and bring fans with them. LeBron James is certainly one of those players. While one may not find many Orlando Magic fans in Iowa, I submit that one would find several Miami Heat fans in Iowa based solely on James. I believe that it is safe to say that the Heat’s geographically diverse fan base is made up of fans who have perhaps never been to south Florida but enjoy watching James play. Additionally, the Bobcats are 16 years younger than their youngest division rival. Building a loyal fan base takes time, and the fact of the matter is that other teams have had more time to build than has Charlotte.

SocialMention is the other tool that I used to analyze the Charlotte Bobcats’ social media presence. From SocialMention: “SocialMention is a social media search and analysis program that aggregates user generated content from across the universe into a single stream of information.” SocialMention takes Facebook, blogs, Twitter, and other social media outlets and integrates it into one report. When I ran a search for Charlotte Bobcats on SocialMention, I noticed that the Bobcats

(continued)

**Exhibit 4. (continued)**

were being mentioned on Facebook, Twitter, and various basketball blogs. One neat feature of SocialMention is that it delves deep into data beyond just mentions. For example, the Bobcats had an 8:1 positive to negative mentions ratio. The team also had a 10% strength rating, which is defined as total number of mentions divided by total possible mentions for a 24 hour period. The brand also had a 13% passion score, which measures how many unique authors are writing about the brand. The brand’s low passion score means that many different people are discussing the brand on social media. Top keywords include charlotte, bobcats, NBA, and playoffs. Top hashtags include bobcats, charlotte, playoffs, and (my personal favorite) ratchet. The team is mentioned on social media every 6 minutes or so, with 8 minutes between each mention.

Overall, I like the Bobcats’ social media strategy. I think that it is telling that their Klout score is nearly even to teams that are much older and more successful than the Bobcats. The Bobcats are only four Klout points behind the world renowned Miami Heat, who are favored to win their third consecutive NBA championship this year. Further, the Bobcats are benefiting from the perfect publicity storm—the return of a wildly popular nickname and competitiveness on the court for the first time in quite a while. The Bobcats also have a social media correspondent that roams Time Warner Cable Arena during games. The social media correspondent offers promotions through social media, including the Tweet your seat promotion that offers in-arena fans the opportunity to submit their seat to @bobcats and possibly win a seat upgrade from the team.

As we have learned, however, there is a large difference between putting a social media strategy in place and maintaining and adjusting that strategy when appropriate. It is important to remember that in sports nothing occurs in a vacuum: more fan support is almost always correlated with success on the court. As the Bobcats’ on the court fortunes continue to improve, it will be interesting to chart the team’s social media metrics.

Klout.com. (2014, April 18). *Charlotte Bobcats*. Klout. Retrieved from <http://klout.com/Bobcats>

SocialMention.com. (2014, April 18). Search results for Charlotte Bobcats. Retrieved from <http://socialmention.com/search?q=charlotte+bobcats&t=all&btnG=Search>

Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2015). *Social media marketing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



When the examples are considered together, it is easy to see that marketing educators have many resources available when they integrate digital and social media metrics into marketing courses. Students can assess the competition, develop a SWOT analysis, measure brand liking, assess sentiment toward a campaign and more. The techniques could be applied to a class client project, to existing cases or to cases developed specifically for the course such as those shown in Exhibit 1.

In summary, this article has reviewed the increasing availability of digital and social media marketing metrics and their value to the industry. It has addressed the need for analytical content for the development of critical thinking skills among marketing students. Case examples of marketers using digital and social promotional tools were described along with the use of relevant marketing metrics for assessing effectiveness. Last, pedagogical suggestions were made for select marketing courses, and approaches were proposed for weaving digital and social media marketing metrics into the marketing curriculum.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### References

- Azam, Z., & Qamar, I. (2011). Qualifying the role of marketing productivity metrics in marketing performance measurement. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 3, 428-440.
- Beauchamp, M., & Bobbitt, M. (2010). Integrating marketing metrics into the marketing curriculum. *Business Education Forum*, 64(3), 41-46.
- Brown, M. (2010, July 14). Social media metrics you should be tracking. *Social Media Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/mikebrown1/146589/6-social-media-metrics-you-should-be-tracking>
- Celuch, K., & Slama, M. (1998). Critical thinking as an integrative theme for teaching lifelong learning skills in marketing. *Marketing Education Review*, 8(3), 1-12.
- Dickson, P. (2009). *MAMetrics*. Portsmouth, NH: Backbone Press. Retrieved from <http://mametrics.ca>
- Edison, S. W., & Geissler, G. (2010, November). "Hmm . . . I never thought of that": An eye-opening adaptation of the six thinking hats system (Innovative Teacher Comment). In W. J. Kehoe & L. K. Whitten (Eds.), *Society for Marketing Advances Proceedings* (p. 4). Mobile, AL: Society for Marketing Advances.
- Glenn, D. (2011, April 14). Business educators struggle to put students to work. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Business-Education-Not-Always/127108/>
- Gremler, D., Hoffman, D. K., Keaveney, S. M., & Wright, L. K. (2000). Experiential learning exercises in services marketing courses. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22, 35-44.
- Hoffman, D., & Fodor, M. (2010, October 1). Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 52(1), 41-49.
- Hopkins, C., Raymond, M. A., & Carlson, L. (2011). Educating students to give them a sustainable competitive advantage. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 33, 337-347.
- Interactive Advertising Bureau. (2009). *Social media ad metrics definitions*. Retrieved from <http://www.iab.net>
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2007). *Marketing management* (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall.
- Mancuso, J., & Stuth, K. (2011). Can social media metrics actually enhance the value of qualitative research? *Marketing Research*, 23(4), 32.
- Likely, F., Rockland, D., & Weiner, W. (2006, May). *Perspectives on the ROI of media relations publicity efforts*. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations. Retrieved from [http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2006\\_ROI\\_LRW.pdf](http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2006_ROI_LRW.pdf)
- Paine, K. D. (2012, June 7). Katie Paine looks back on 10 years of public relations measurement (The Paine of Measurement, 10th Anniversary Issue) [Weblog]. Retrieved from <http://www.themeasurementstandard.com/2012/06/looking-back-on-10-years-of-public-relations-measurement/>
- Pilling, B., Rigdon, E., & Brightman, H. (2012). Building a metrics-enabled marketing curriculum: The Cornerstone course. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 34, 179-195.
- Raab, D. (2011). New metrics for social media. *Information Management*, 21(6), 24-25.
- Saber, J., & Foster, M. K. (2011). The agony and the ecstasy: Teaching marketing metrics to undergraduate business students. *Marketing Education Review*, 21(2), 9-20.
- Shanda, R., Asamoah, D., & Ponna, N. (2013). Research and pedagogy in business analytics: Opportunities and illustrative examples. *Journal of Computing & Information Technology*, 3, 171-183.
- Smit, E. G., & Neijens, P. C. (2011). The march to reliable metrics. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 51(1 Suppl.), 124-135.
- Solcansky, M., Sychrova, L., & Milichovsky, F. (2011). Marketing effectiveness by way of metrics. *Economics and Management*, 16, 1323-1328.
- Thomas, T. (2009). Social media metrics not set and forget. *B&T Magazine*, 59(2686), 16.
- Tuten, T., & Solomon, M. (2015). *Social media marketing* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zahay, D., & Griffin, A. (2010). Marketing strategy selection, marketing metrics, and firm performance. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 25, 80-93.