

Making sense of your social media strategies using the Culture24 Social Media Evaluation Framework

(Written in Sept 2013)

Summary

This Social Media Evaluation Framework, developed by Culture24, offers a way to approach thinking about and measuring your social media activities. It summarises the relevant social media measurement methodologies, metrics and tools that organisations should consider using when investigating social media behaviours and relates these to various organisational goals.

This resource will help you consider and select which of the measures matter for your organisation and then identify the performance indicators and tools to collect and analyse. This resource also includes a series of practical examples that illustrate how to evaluate social media from different perspectives.

Key learning outcomes

This resource will help you define your own framework for measuring your social media activities based on specific strategic objectives. More specifically you will be able to:

- Select the key performance indicators to measure the results of your social media activities
- Find out about the tools to capture, analyse and report your social media data
- Implement a process for social media analytics in your organisation
- Learn from examples about how to evaluate the success of your social media activities.

Why is this important?

Cultural organisations are using social media platforms to communicate, interact and engage with their audiences. Many organisations today have a profile on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest or Tumblr, where they post news, promote their events, disseminate their content or start conversations and debates. But how do they evaluate the success of these social media activities? How do they decide if a particular channel is working for them and is valuable as an investment? It is important to be aware that social media is not free, even though the publishing platforms and channels you can use at first appear to be. Rather, social media requires an investment of time and resource to maintain and evaluate, and therefore return on investment decisions need to be made in relation to its use.

Choosing the right metrics and methodologies is one of the main challenges for organisations seeking to analyse the social media behaviours of their audiences and it is crucial that this is done against their own specific organisational goals. Despite the amount of data available through various tools, selecting the most appropriate metrics and making sense of the numbers represents a major obstacle in any evaluation. The lack of definition of standard metrics is an impediment for social media teams to demonstrate the value of their activities and for senior management to understand the results and to make decisions based on this data. Furthermore, getting the right set of tools to report the data represents another major difficulty, as data needs to be collected from different sources and again, each tool has its own metric definitions.

Establishing your own evaluation framework helps you pinpoint which metrics matter for your organisation and incorporate them in your strategy. It will help to track progress against your social media goals, identify what is working well and where you need to improve and provide visibility of the impact caused by your social media activities.

Who is this resource for?

This resource will be useful for anyone who uses social media as part of their job and needs to understand the behaviour of social media users and report the impact of this work. This might be: marketers, community managers, digital producers, audience researchers, PR managers and visitor services teams.

This resource might be also useful for people in senior positions who need to increase their understanding of social media evaluation in order to inform decision making.

What is the Culture24 Social Media Evaluation Framework?

This Social Media Evaluation Framework (see Figure 1) summarises some of the relevant social media measurement methodologies, metrics and tools that you could consider in respect of your organisational goals.

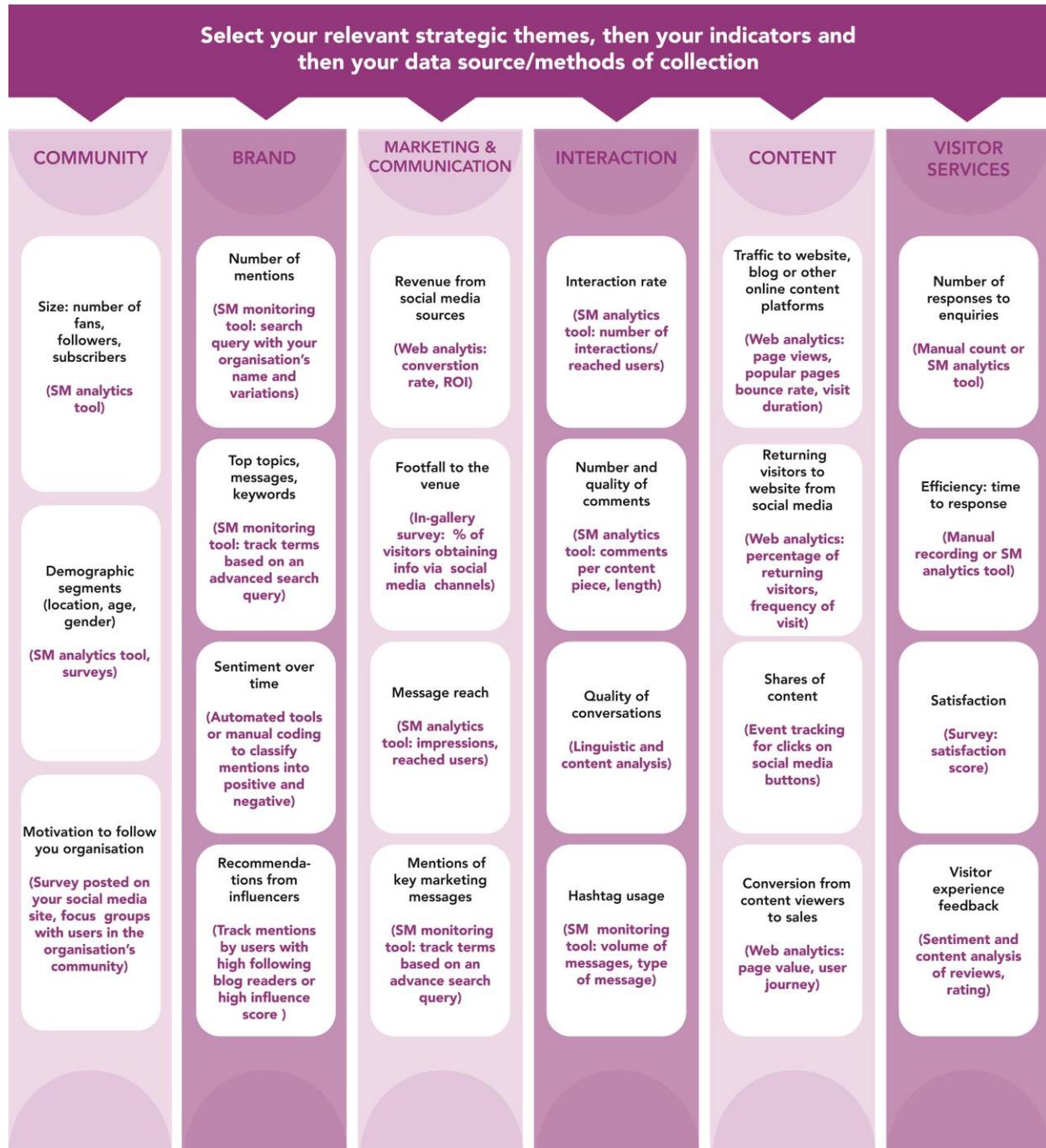


Figure 1: The Culture24 Social Media Evaluation Framework

The Framework was developed collaboratively over phase's 1 and 2 of the Culture24 Let's Get Real action research projects. It has been refined and shaped by Culture24 using the shared learning coming from those groups and the associated experts working to support the project, in particular Elena Villaespesa.

The Framework lists six main social media strategic themes:

- Community
- Brand
- Marketing & communication
- Interaction
- Content
- Visitor services

These represent the kinds of broad organisational objectives that may relate to your usage of social media. They are also starting points to help you consider **why** you wish to measure your social media activities and what you are trying to achieve. Under each of these themes are examples of standard performance indicators (e.g. revenue, message reach) that illustrate **what** to measure in relation to your specific theme. Further information is then supplied as to **how** to measure these indicators via details of the data source and data capture methods used.

This Framework was developed in response to a desire from many cultural organisations to define and put in place a process to help them make sense of the vast number of tools, measures and metrics available in connection to interrogating the value of their social media activities.

There is however a tension in seeking to apply a formalised structure to an activity such as social media, which is an inherently social, and as such a very fluid and informal, form of audience engagement. It is also important to note that most social media activity occurs outside of an organisation's own channel and control, often within an individual's private channels. This means that any social media analysis of your own activities will never fully reflect the degree of social mentions your organisation will receive.

However without the ability for organisations to, at the very least, refer back to a wider set of strategic themes, their decisions about whether to adopt, continue or abandon their particular social media strategies might simply be shots in the dark.

As such, this Framework can be used to support a formal process of social media evaluation that is centered on a set of core strategic themes, or more informally as a point of reference to better understand the scope of social media metrics and analysis as part of a lighter touch social media strategy.

How to use the Framework

The following steps go into more detail as to how the Framework can be explored. Whilst it is recommended that you refer to these steps when interpreting the Framework for your needs, it is up to you whether you integrate these formally into your processes or use them to informally reflect on your own activities.



1. Define your objectives

Social media platforms can be used in many different ways depending on the needs of your organisation, and they can be managed in different departments, each with different goals and targets. Therefore, the first step for you to consider, before looking at any data, is to define the specific social media objectives of your organisation. The more targeted and specific these objectives in terms of exactly who you want to reach and what behaviour you want to provoke, the easier it will be to work through the stages of this Framework. For instance from an engagement perspective, you may wish to generate meaningful conversations with your followers on specific topics or from a marketing perspective your objective could be to drive ticket sales from social media channels.

A key outcome of this stage is to decide on the most appropriate social media platform that supports the kind of interaction you are looking for, and determine if it is used by the target audience you want to connect with.

2. Select the performance indicators

Once your objectives are defined, you should explore the relevant performance indicators. The Framework lists examples of standard social media metrics and indicators for each of the strategic themes. Based on a combination of your own specific objectives, as well as the social media platform chosen, you can seek to identify and define the relevant metrics and indicators necessary. In some cases you may need to use additional appropriate methods of calculation to determine these.

For example, if your objective is to increase interaction on Facebook, then you should consider measuring the ‘interaction rate’, which can be calculated by identifying ‘interactions’ (e.g. people talking about you via likes, shares, or comments) and dividing these by ‘reached users’.

3. Set up the right measurement tools

There are numerous social media measurement tools available and it is crucial to select the appropriate combination of tools to collect, analyse and report the right information for your own organisational needs. You may also need to invest in setting up and customising some of these tools in order to meet your specific objectives.

In order to choose the right tools, you should determine firstly what you hope to measure in relation to your objectives. Once you have a clearer picture about what your measurement requirements are you can evaluate the available tools against these requirements, and also in relation to other criteria such as which platforms are covered, the available metrics, reporting functionalities and pricing.

A list of the available social media measurement tools can be found here:

<http://weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/>.

Some examples include:

Facebook Insights (www.facebook.com/help/search/?q=insights), Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com), Pinterest Analytics (www.business.pinterest.com/analytics), Topsy (www.topsy.com) and Klout (www.klout.com/home)

Remember however that these tools change all the time, some disappear without warning and new tools are being developed as companies change hands and user loyalty shifts.

4. Collect and analyse the data

Once you have determined which analytical tools to use, you can go ahead and collect and analyse some data. The data collected might be quantitative or qualitative and different types of data mining methods can be applied from numerical analysis (e.g. descriptive statistics) to textual analysis (e.g. content and sentiment analysis).

Data can be analysed to explore trends (what subjects are popular at the moment and why), to provide benchmarks (to look for patterns of growth or reduction) and to evaluate which of your social media tactics and strategies worked well and which can be improved.

You are looking for data that can help you to tell the story of your social media activities. You want to look for evidence of success and failure, considering the key lessons that you can then apply back to your social media tactics. This might be to change the frequency of your posts, to change the time that you share something or alter the allocation of resource dedicated to a particular channel.

A key outcome of this step should be a series of recommendations for next actions, as informed by the data.

5. Report the results

Reporting and sharing your results is a vital step as without this you are not acting on any of your insights or building the digital understanding and capacity of your staff.

You need to internally communicate the impact of your social media efforts, and be able to reflect on how your activities are helping you (or not) to meet your broader organisational goals. Your reports should present the data in such a way that will help your colleagues and senior management in the decision-making process.

Illustrative examples

To guide you through the practical application of the Framework, we have detailed some examples which illustrate how the Framework might be interpreted in relation to particular strategic themes (the data gathered relates to Culture24).

EXAMPLE 1 (COMMUNITY): Measuring community growth

When you create a new profile on a social media platform you should aim to promote it in various ways (e.g. via your website, email bulletins, leaflets, screens in your venue etc), in order to grow your community you are engaging with you via this channel.

You should consider measuring community growth by identifying the increase in number of users who follow you via this platform. You can also (depending on the analytics tools used), capture other data regarding your community, such as their demographics or identify from which sources they are visiting you (on the social media channel in question).

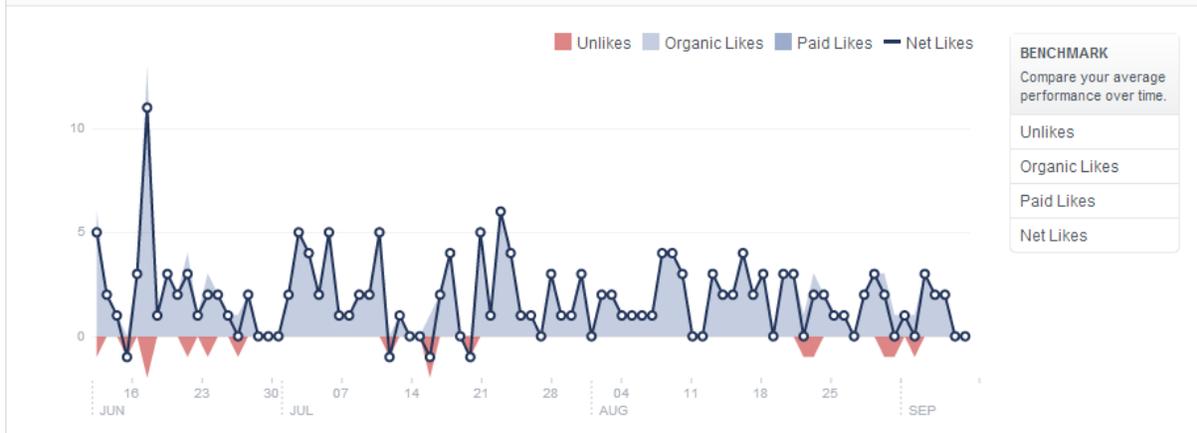
Objective	Performance Indicator	Tools and methods
Increase the size of the community on Facebook	- Total number of likes (fans) - Percentage of increase compared to previous period	Facebook Insights

Total Page Likes as of Today: 2,521



Net Likes: What Changed

Likes - unlikes = net likes



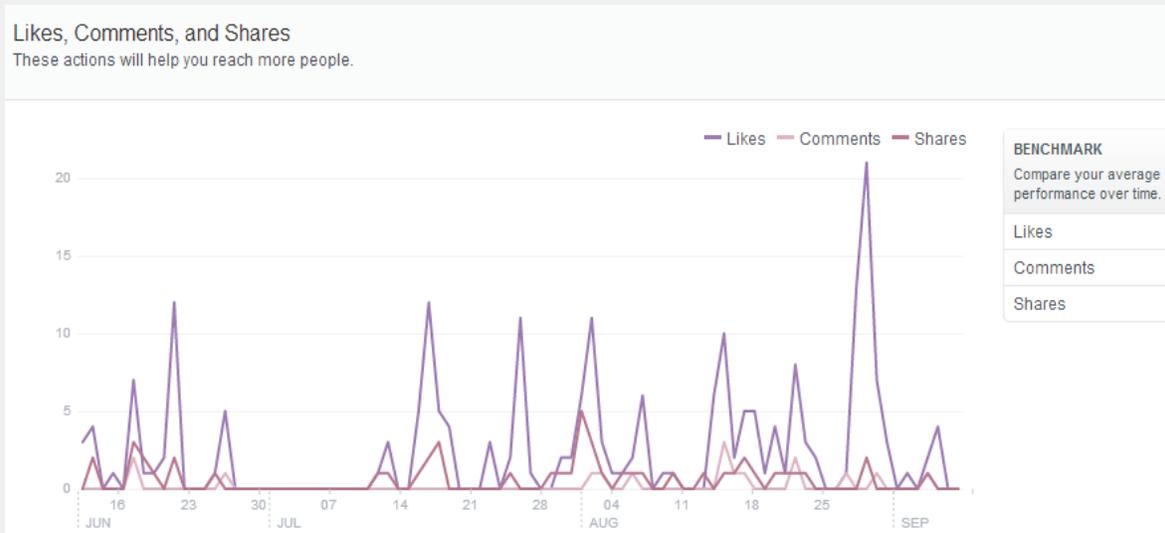
These graphs demonstrate a modest yet continued growth of 'total page likes' as well as a fairly similar activity pattern of 'net likes' at around 4 to 5 net likes a day. These results back up Culture24's overall strategy of maintaining a presence on Facebook due to its established use amongst audiences, yet not regarding it as a very high priority channel with which to really engage our audiences. We therefore keep our Facebook channel updated with regular content but do not commit significant time and resource towards its use, compared to our other channels.

EXAMPLE 2 (INTERACTION): Measuring interaction

When organisations post content on social media platforms, they often wish to engage their audiences by encouraging them to click on a link to a blog post, share a photo or comment on information posted about a particular cultural event.

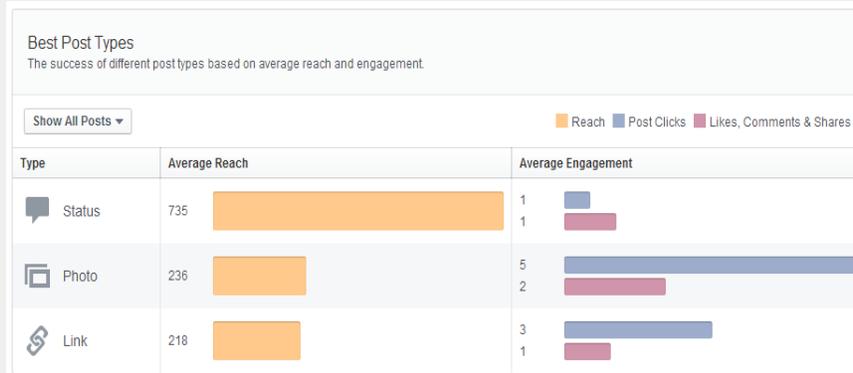
Measuring the interaction rate, this is the number of ‘interactions’ (number of people who have clicked anywhere on your post) divided by the number of ‘reached users’ (number of people who have seen your post), will allow you to evaluate the success of your posts. You can then examine the posts that draw a higher interaction rate in order to understand what type of content drives higher engagement.

Objective	Performance Indicator	Tools and methods
Generate interaction of users with content posted on Facebook	- Interaction rate Comments + Likes + Shares / Reached users	Facebook Insights



Facebook Insights: Daily number of likes, comments and shares

These results demonstrate a large spike in audience interaction with Culture24’s Facebook content towards the end of August. As a next step it would be useful to check what posts or content might have created such a spike at that time, to determine whether such an approach could be replicated again in the future.



The data also shows that Culture24’s Facebook posts containing images tend to drive the greatest interaction rate. This could inform future approaches to Facebook posting by using images where possible.

EXAMPLE 3 (CONTENT): Measuring content distribution

Cultural organisations often have a huge amount of rich content including digitised collections, blog posts, and videos etc that are hosted on their websites. Social media provides a means to distribute messaging about this content and consequently drive traffic back to their websites. Through web analytics tool such as Google Analytics, you can gather key data relating to this such as the amount of traffic to your website from social media channels, details of the behaviour of your audiences on your website when linking from social media channels and identifying which pages of content on your website are the most shared on social media.

Objective	Performance Indicator	Tools and methods
Drive traffic to the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of visits - Number of page views - Most shared URLs 	Google Analytics: social media reports

Social Network	Visits	↓	Pageviews	Avg. Visit Duration	Pages / Visit
1. Twitter	5,607		9,399	00:01:36	1.68
2. Facebook	5,522		7,780	00:00:52	1.41
3. Fark	1,019		1,048	00:00:05	1.03
4. Pinterest	979		1,121	00:00:11	1.15
5. StumbleUpon	529		575	00:00:38	1.09
6. WordPress	288		576	00:01:12	2.00
7. Blogger	264		411	00:01:08	1.56
8. Yahoo! Answers	151		176	00:00:08	1.17
9. Tumblr	110		127	00:00:31	1.15
10. reddit	61		66	00:00:03	1.08

Google Analytics social report: network referrals

The table above show that the majority of visits to the Culture24 website (over a particular period) from social media channels come from Twitter and Facebook. It would be useful to compare this list versus an understanding of current investment on the various channels, to identify if some social media sites are outperforming or underperforming their role as a referrers compared to time and resource invested. It would also be useful to compare the total visit numbers from these social media channels against the total visits to the website in the same period, to understand the overall impact of social media as a referrer to the Culture24 website.

Shared URL	Visits	↓	Pageviews	Avg. Visit Duration	Data Hub Activities	Pages / Visit
1. www.culture24.org.uk/history%20%20heritage/work%20%20daily%20life/art443221	1,089		1,125	00:00:05	0	1.03
2. www.culture24.org.uk/history%20%20heritage/war%20%20conflict/art437688	774		980	00:00:32	0	1.27
3. www.culture24.org.uk/home	745		2,899	00:07:44	61	3.89
4. www.culture24.org.uk/history%20%20heritage/literature%20%20music/art442217	721		1,031	00:00:30	3	1.43
5. www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/war-and-conflict/art448756	351		364	00:00:05	0	1.04
6. www.culture24.org.uk/art362437	310		431	00:00:18	0	1.39
7. www.culture24.org.uk/am9801	275		297	00:00:06	0	1.08
8. www.culture24.org.uk/history%20%20heritage/transport/trains%20and%20railways/art445401	262		299	00:00:25	0	1.14
9. www.culture24.org.uk/history+&+heritage/archaeology/art79156	256		286	00:01:06	0	1.12
10. www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/archaeology/art446701	201		249	00:00:38	0	1.24

Google Analytics social report: landing pages

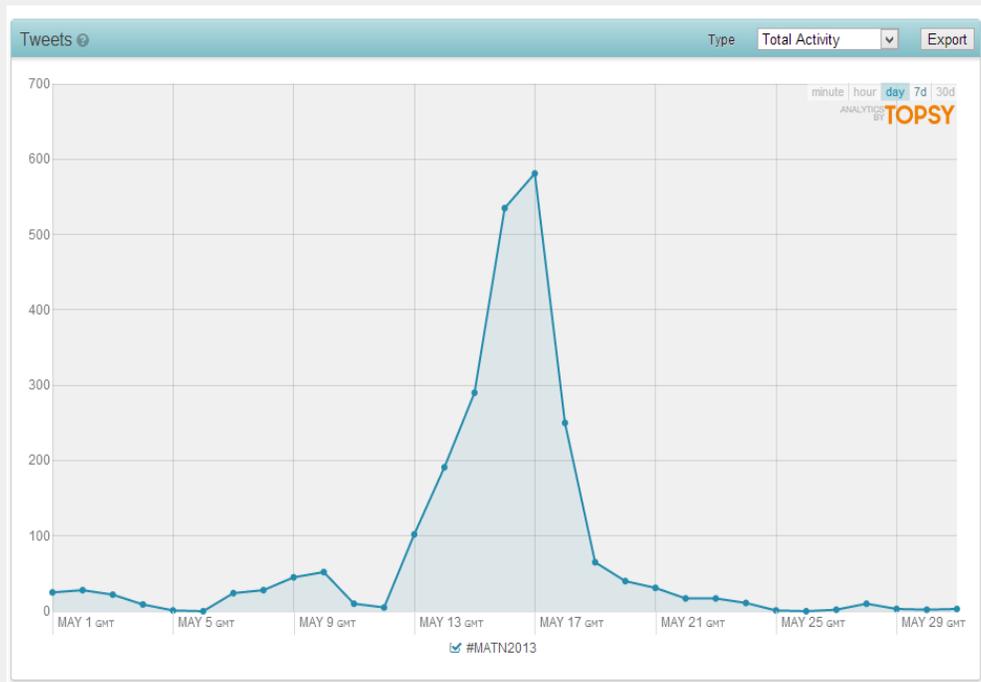
The table above shows the most popular Culture24 website landing pages from social media. The majority of these, including the first two, relate to particular pages of specific content. The generally low ‘average visit duration’ of these specific content pages might concern us if our primary objective for the use of social media was to drive audiences to our website and get them to stay there. However it could be that audiences prefer to stay on their respective social media channels and only visit websites to consume content and then revert back to their social media channels. Whilst further detailed investigation would be needed to confirm this, such behaviours support our more ‘content focused’ strategy which prioritises the consumption of content as paramount, irrespective of what the audience did before or afterwards.

The data in this table also supports our emphasis on using the home page to prompt audiences to explore other content on the site, as the average visit duration of visitors landing on our home page is very high.

EXAMPLE 4 (INTERACTION/MARKETING): Measuring hashtag usage

The use of hashtags in cultural organisations often relate to the promotion of specific campaigns, events, exhibitions or joint initiative such as #Askcurator. You can utilise data gathered in relation to the use of hashtags in various ways; such as analysing the volume of tweets over time using a particular hashtag; or exploring the type of person/organisation who are actively using the hashtag to determine their level of influence; or even examining the number and type of images that are uploaded in connection to a hashtag.

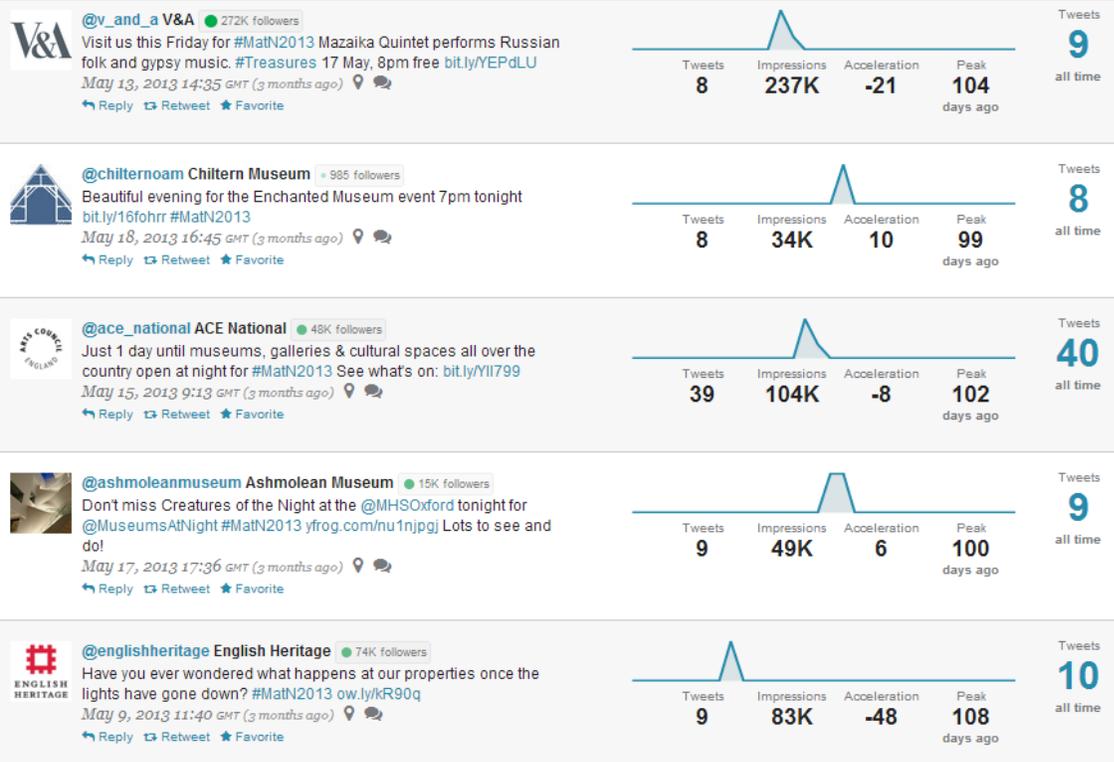
Objective	Performance Indicator	Tools and methods
Encourage users to comment their cultural experience on Twitter and upload images using a specific hashtag	- Number of tweets that use the hashtag - Influencers	Topsy: volume of tweets and influencers analysis



Volume of tweets for the hashtag #MATN2013 (Museums at Night)

The spike in the graph above confirms the popularity of the #MATN2013 hashtag during the Museums at Night festival itself, which is entirely expected. However to promote a broader

audience engagement with the festival, it would be interesting in future years to explore tactics that can keep the level of Twitter interest high both before and after the festival, as well as during it.



Example of influencers that tweeted during the event using the hashtag #MATN2013

The above shows a small sample of organisations that had tweeted multiple times regarding the festival and could be regarded as having particular influence with target audiences. Future actions could focus on continuing to engage these organisations to promote the next festival via Twitter, or identifying if there are particular influential organisations or individuals that are not currently on such a list, but we would like to engage more actively.

Glossary of terms

- **Community:** number of users that follow an organisation on a social media platform (fans, subscribers, likes, followers).
- **Reach:** number of users that have seen the content posted. There are normally three ways of reaching users: organic (those who follow the organisation), viral (users that see the content because it was shared by followers) and paid (promoted campaigns).
- **Interaction:** count of actions such as likes, comments, shares, clicks to view images or videos, and favourites on the post published.
- **Sentiment analysis:** user opinion related to a brand, product or topic online, normally categorised into positive, negative or neutral.

Other resources/references to consult

For further information please refer to:

Google Analytics social media reports

<http://www.google.com/analytics/features/social.html>

Tracking clicks on social media buttons

<https://developers.google.com/analytics/devguides/collection/gajs/gaTrackingSocial>

Facebook Insights: metrics definitions

<https://www.facebook.com/help/336893449723054/>

Museum Analytics

<http://www.museum-analytics.org/>

Google Analytics Multichannel Reports

<http://www.google.com/analytics/features/multichannel-funnels.htm>

List of social media tools

<http://weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research>