

# Guidehouse's Social Media Solution – Explore, Unlock and Harness the Power of Public Discussion



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## Introduction

Since the launch of the Internet, the pace and production of information and data have increased exponentially. This rise has been especially accelerated by the online social networks and social media platforms<sup>1</sup> connecting billions of users worldwide and enabling individuals to generate, share and *interact with* information—all via a simple keystroke, swipe or click of a button.

In fact, now, more than ever, people turn to social media to get informed. Accordingly, social media platforms have created and fostered a unique and expansive information *and* communications medium/environment capable of offering deep and vitally useful insight into public perceptions and beliefs about... everything.

Yet, social media is more than just an ever-growing realm of information. People use social media, and the interactivity that social networks offer, as a true information marketplace on multiple, constantly expanding levels. In addition to being a source for news, it's a place to share personal updates, express opinions and beliefs on diverse topics, organize action and engage with family, friends, local leaders and the public at large in a continuously evolving dialogue. This is one of those shifts in history and in human behavior that is truly revolutionary in terms of virtually limitless impact.

Indeed, across social media platforms, content is being created and disseminated by a remarkably varied array of users. The population involved ranges from the old to the young, across genders and throughout social and economic subsets of the universal population, often transcending race, religion, ethnicity and nationality.

What's more, few companies and organizations have gone beyond skimming the surface of the powerful insights that can be acquired from in-depth analysis of social media and the strength behind such analysis. However, those who recognize and understand the vital role social media data plays in revealing sentiment and perception across issues and topics of key concern to them will gain a competitive edge. Harnessing the power of social media data can reveal nuances in how populations think, grow, perceive and react to the changing world around them, enabling organizations to take and influence actions in response.

## What is Social Media Research and Analysis?

Social media research and analysis (SMRA) is the ability to not only read, see and hear what others are posting online, but also to understand, interpret, measure, analyze and assess individuals' experiences in comparison to one another. It is the refined ability to understand language within its nuanced context and at scale—through text, pictures, video, audio, infographics, etc.—across an array of social networks and digital platforms, including:



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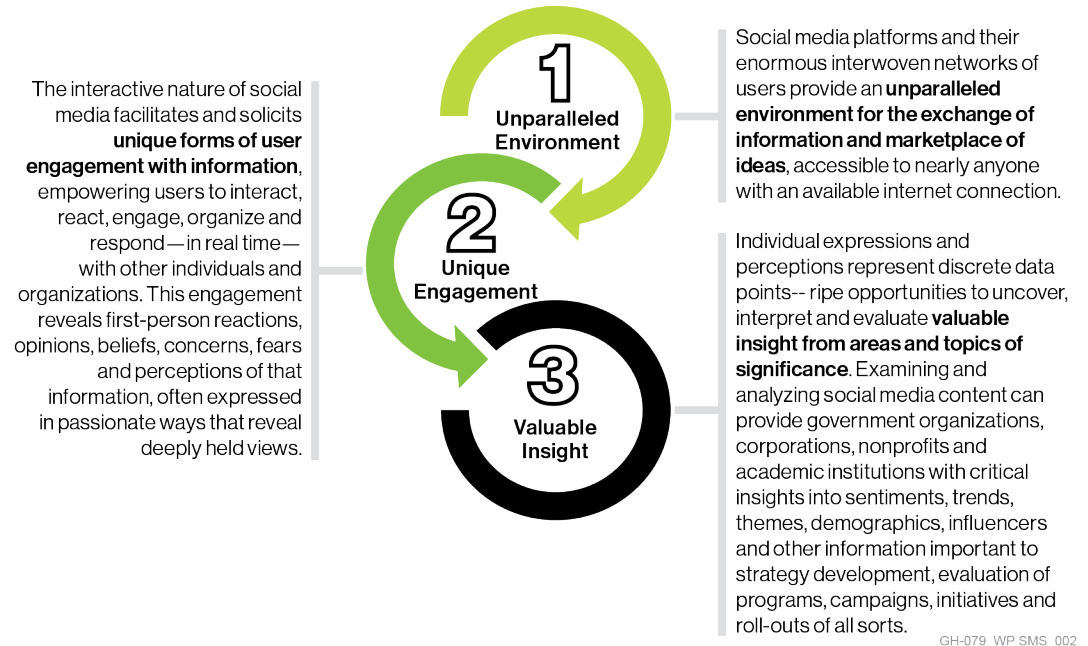
<sup>1</sup> At Guidehouse, we define social media as any platform that allows a user to create original content or to react to and express their opinions on content.

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## Why is SMRA Important?

According to a 2018 Pew Research Survey, 68 percent of Americans now consume their news through social media platforms. That is to say nearly 7 out of every 10 Americans now get their news and information not from traditional media sources, but from stories and commentary posted and shared on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Gab and other social media platforms.

Specifically, the importance of SMRA for decision makers can be distilled into three compounding factors:



On the whole, careful and qualified SMRA **enables organizations to understand, analyze and make sense of the perceptions that individuals and groups have about established and nascent policies and programs, topics of interest, change management initiatives and other offerings.**

## What Information Can Our SMRA Solution and Capabilities Reveal?

**Sentiment** – gain insight into the feelings of stakeholders, including what is behind their words, identifying subtlety, nuance, sarcasm, humor, distrust, anger, support, opposition, etc.

**Influence** – uncover the strength of organizational and individual influence alongside identification of prominent voices driving a given conversation.

**Geography** – reveal geographical differences in data, identifying problematic areas and opportunities for resource allocation or concentrated messaging outreach.

**Demographics** – identify distinct voices across demographic type (gender, age group, race, organizational ties, members of Congress, other stakeholder groups of interest, etc.).

**Channels** – understand where important stakeholder groups go for related information and determine primary distribution channels and type of media association and alignment.

**Frequency** – track specific items of interest to understand how often users interact with related information.

**Trends** – surface and comprehend trend and pattern development across time and space, taking into account the underlying qualitative dimensions of conversations, such as those related to politics, ethics, business practices, organizational practices, social factors and economics.

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## Guidehouse's Unique Approach to SMRA

In close and iterative collaboration with our clients, Guidehouse's SMRA team works to capture and analyze information, discussions and interactions across an array of digital platforms. To perceive and discern this data in the most meaningful and actionable way, we utilize six steps for every SMRA project. Throughout this process, the SMRA team integrates and deploys state-of-the-art technologies and tools, including machine learning and natural language processing, to drive process efficiencies, accuracy and depth of analysis.

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### **Step 1 – Conduct initial open-source<sup>2</sup> research and develop a targeted research plan.**

Our team investigates how users are talking about and discussing a topic of interest, including the specific language and terms they are using and the digital platforms and networks involved, to identify an operational research plan.

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### **Step 2 – Collect related information and create a discrete data set.**

Our team applies and deploys logic-based queries to collect relevant information and consolidate that information into a comprehensive, often times voluminous data set.

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### **Step 3 – Process and clean the data.**

Our team then undertakes the substantial and critical task of processing and “cleaning” the data. This includes the refined filtering out of irrelevant content (e.g., “noise”) and the process of validating collected content with the support of technology-enabled process efficiencies. This step is vital to ensuring each data set has veracity and integrity.

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### **Step 4 – Classify the data.**

Based on our evolving expertise with the data set, our team creates and applies categorical classifications to curate and structure the data in a way that is meaningful for analysis and visualization. This includes the assignment of sentiment based on situational context and usage of language, and identification of key topics, themes and issues, including the relatedness of topics.

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### **Step 5 – Analyze the data.**

With a clean and classified data set, our team—including our data analysts—then applies natural language processing (NLP) technologies to quantitatively and qualitatively surface, assign and evaluate patterns and trends within the data.

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### **Step 6 – Report findings and provide recommendations.**

Finally, our team synthesizes diverse data findings into concrete findings—a data story to drive action, impact and value for our clients.

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<sup>2</sup> Open-source information is collected from publicly available sources, including social media, published reports, news, blogs and forums, syndicated databases and much more.

### **Our Niche— Beyond the Basics**

There are many companies that perform social media basics... describing what is happening (e.g., how many posts comments, likes or reposts there have been). **Our niche in the market extends beyond this fundamental level to diagnose why activity is occurring, correlating and predicting what is likely to happen, anticipating changes and identifying courses of action.** In short, we describe “what is happening” as only the most elementary and initial step in a service protocol that leads from elevated analysis all the way through to tangible action and return. These are the characteristics that differentiate us from other companies that indicate they carry out social media “monitoring”, “listening” or other similar work.

## **Guidehouse’s SMRA Solution – Creating Profound, Enduring Impact**

Guidehouse has employed SMRA for key clients in multiple sectors and in diverse ways. We have worked with federal healthcare agencies to identify and evaluate public sentiment on critical national offerings, including complex technological changes associated with a large, long-term, multiagency program. Our team has also worked with a quasi-public financial services provider, conducting comparative sentiment analysis of the client and its top competitors.

Notably, we have also used our social media research and analysis solution to assist our clients in making crucial decisions and then taking the following types of actions:

- **Development and calibration of strategic communication plans** – informing and optimizing messaging development and outreach, both at a national level and at local levels for programs, policies and coordinated organizational efforts. This has included the identification of various influencing factors to understand where associated offerings are hitting the mark or where intended messaging falls short of its ultimate reception. In short, through our work, **clients have learned what resonates and what does not, and have designed their communications based on these results—achieving concrete, positive impact as a consequence.**
- **Executive preparation for congressional hearing attendance and testimony** – identifying issues of focus or concern for the American public and members of Congress in order to inform and advise senior government officials as they prepare to brief congressional staff or testify in front of committees. **Specifically, clients have been able to proactively anticipate, prepare and respond to congressional questions.**
- **Expansion of competitive market strategy** – ascertaining elements that give a humanizing look and feel to a government program that could otherwise be thought of as cold and bureaucratic to **strategically identify and reframe perception of a client within the market.**
- **Segmentation of audiences** – identifying unique issues and concerns related to programs and services for specific geographies, including across city, state, regional and national levels, to **inform and steer targeted and unique geographic outreach and engagement, reframing a big government program’s feel into stories about real people and true caring.**

Substance is key, but branding and narratives are important as well.

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## How Can SMRA Benefit Your Organization?

In two words—*powerfully and dynamically*. Applications for SMRA are diverse and flexible, providing deep insight and value into all aspects of a business, including its personnel, the organizational effectiveness and efficiency that stem from internal knowledge, and public perceptions around key topics of concern and more. With SMRA, Guidehouse can offer:



**Situational Awareness** – provide near-real-time understanding of public perceptions and changes as they unfold, as well as the impact they may have on messaging, campaigns and even Congressional hearings.



**Strategic Communications** – identify advantageous language and terms for engagement and outreach, to understand what really resonates with primary audiences, as well as how different portions of the public will receive and digest various messages.



**Strategy Development** – develop strategic and internal communications campaigns, budget narratives and story boards for proposed business or mission expansion, and big ideas for describing a vision, plan or accomplishments for others to internalize.



**Metrics and Evaluation** – identify baseline metrics and provide continuous evaluation of changes across time.



**Reputation and Brand Analysis** – understand how your organization is perceived and trusted and the impact these perceptions may have.



**Audience and Stakeholder Engagement** – understand audience typologies and segments to maximize organizational engagement and resonance with primary audiences and expand to include aspirational audiences.



**Threat and Risk Identification and Monitoring** – identify and track potential organizational risks as they occur, and more powerfully anticipate future ones.



**Competitor Analysis** – situate and enhance your organization in comparison to others, including in the facilitation of partnerships or mergers and acquisitions.



**Market Research and Whitespace Analysis** – explore new areas for organizational growth and evaluate the projected viability of current projects or products; identify new areas for organizational expansion for reputational, communications and market building.

## Conclusion

At Guidehouse, we provide meaningful and continuous SMRA for our clients by broadening their situational awareness and understanding of public perceptions and sentiment around their key initiatives, programs and large-scale changes. This, in turn, impacts their business and mission operations and execution, continuity, services, employees and overall success.

**Guidehouse's SMRA solution digs deep into the data, analyzes the results and informs and recommends courses of actions for government and business decision makers to yield powerful, real and tangible wins.** That is our mission—to powerfully and proactively inform strategy development, understand the sentiments and beliefs surrounding topics of interest, capitalize on an issue's momentum and anticipate future actions. We measure social media engagement, identify influencers and other factors that matter the most, and put quantitative results within a comprehensive qualitative context. In doing so, we are able to contextualize our statistical findings and to identify and explain the complex, nuanced and compelling story waiting to be set free.



## About Guidehouse

Guidehouse is a leading global provider of consulting services to the public and commercial markets with broad capabilities in management, technology, and risk consulting. We help clients address their toughest challenges with a focus on markets and clients facing transformational change, technology-driven innovation and significant regulatory pressure. Across a range of advisory, consulting, outsourcing, and technology/analytics services, we help clients create scalable, innovative solutions that prepare them for future growth and success. Headquartered in Washington DC, the company has more than 7,000 professionals in more than 50 locations. Guidehouse is a Veritas Capital portfolio company, led by seasoned professionals with proven and diverse expertise in traditional and emerging technologies, markets and agenda-setting issues driving national and global economies.

For more information, please visit: [www.guidehouse.com](http://www.guidehouse.com).

