

Practical Tips and Guidance on Monitoring your Twitter Activity

By Betty Paton*, January 2014

Using social media to disseminate and access development research is fast becoming the standard in mainstream organisations. Researchers, policy actors and other potential users of research are utilising applications such as Twitter to both promote their own research, access other researcher's work and hold conversations, debates and discussions around particular subject areas. The following practical tips have been put together to assist you in making the most of this social media tool, specifically monitoring and evaluating the impact your Twitter activity is having for organisational and stakeholder analysis.

This guide assumes an already basic working knowledge of this platform, if you want to know about the basics of Twitter [watch this video \(http://ow.ly/sSuMi\)](http://ow.ly/sSuMi).



Some #Hashtags to experiment with:

#TTIPEC
#thinktanks
#impact
#policy
#theoryofchange
#policybrief
#knowledgesharing
#opendata
#OA #openaccess
#evidence
#publicengagement
#communication
#researchcomms
#researchuptake

Practical Tips and Recommended Daily Actions:

- Manage your account manually: Sending out only automated tweets can save you a little bit of time, but it will cost you a lot of valuable engagement in the long run.
- Use #hashtags to engage in conversations around specific research areas. Hashtags allow you to generate discussion about a particular topic or event.
- Manage those that you are following by organising them into lists within Twitter - this will save you time as you can just follow tweets from one particular list when you want information on a specific subject area.
- Respond promptly to questions or comments about your tweets and make sure that you are up-to-speed with Twitter etiquette (thank those that retweet you, welcome new followers and always correctly cite your retweets).
- Twitter is a useful tool to keep people informed and up-to-date at events, promoting live streaming, live blogging, or to bring attention to speeches.

Tracking your Twitter Campaign:

There are many tools available online to track specific social media campaigns across the web. Make sure that, before you start your campaign, you identify which tools you're going to use to monitor the impact of your campaign. Ensuring that you have created accounts for the tools you choose and completed any other setting up that is required ahead of sending that first tweet will also save you a lot of time in the long run.

When putting together reports on social media campaigns, the stats are often what stakeholders regard as the most significant information. Yes, the numbers are important, but it can frequently be an oversight not to also capture qualitative data too (screengrabs of positive retweets or responses to

During your campaign, I recommend capturing as many screengrabs as you can of any engagement you receive – remember these won't last on Twitter forever, grab some proof of the impact you're having! Below is an example of the feedback we used to capture monthly for @DFID_Research:



Of course, the statistics and data from your campaign will also provide you with valuable insight into how far your work has travelled across the web. There are a number of great tools available online which, with a little bit of set-up work, will give you a wealth of information.

Recording quantitative data and statistics:

- 1) **HootSuite** provides a number of monitoring tools and if you pay a small monthly fee for a PRO account, you can link it to your Google analytics. If you do this, by adding a small amount of specific coding (utm parameter) to each tweet url, you can easily track your links as they travel the Twittersphere (more on this below). You can also create customised reports in HootSuite, including:
 - Breakdown of 'click-throughs' from the ow.ly/ht.ly URL shortener.
 - Top 'influencers' that have mentioned your Twitter handle
 - Most popular messages (number of clicks and RTs)
 - Clicks by region (% and numerical)
 - Top Referrers by clicks (where people are finding your info from)
- 2) **Twitter Counter** is a good tool to analyse your follower stats, providing:
 - a. Numerical breakdown of the increase in followers (average of follower growth per day)
 - b. Stats for the number of Tweets sent out each day and our activity (RTs and mentions - engagement)

3) **TweeterSpy**: This tool requires you to add specific coding to your website, but once it is set up, TweeterSpy gives you the unique advantage of actually knowing which specific tweets and conversations from other people are bringing you the most traffic.

4) **Hashtracking.com**: This tool enables you to map all of the engagement your campaign #hashtag has generated –it is best to do this promptly after an event/campaign launches as information on Twitter become more diluted and harder to track the longer you leave it.

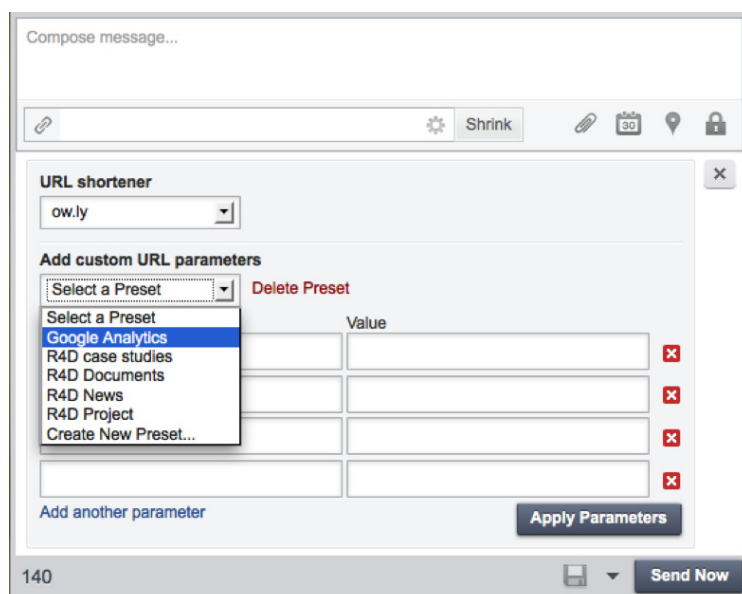
5) **Twitalyzer**: Gives you 'one-click access' to Twitter metrics that analyze followers, mentions, retweets, and influencers and their locations. It can also be used to compare your Twitter account to those of your competitors.

For those who want more detailed information...

Google Analytics and 'UTM parameters':

In order to monitor the reach of the tweets you send out more effectively, you can sync your Hootsuite account to Google Analytics. By also adding UTM parameters (a specific bit of coding) to the end of each URL, you can monitor engagement in even more detail. UTM parameters are simply tags that you add to a URL, when someone clicks on a URL with UTM parameters, those tags are sent back to your Google Analytics for tracking.

The image to the right shows how you can select a Google Analytics (GA) preset within HootSuite to add particular code onto your URLs and track them back into GA. In this instance for @DFID_Research, we created presets for case studies, documents, news and projects in order to divide the stats for each of these types of content within GA. All click-throughs on each link will then appear in GA as a separate campaign. This means that you can easily see what type of content got the most clicks and was most popular without having to decipher what individual URLs were linked to.



*Social Media Consultant, CommsConsult Ltd. betty@commsconsult.org

Research to Action in partnership with CommsConsult Ltd.
and Results for Development:



www.researchtoaction.org
E: info@researchtoaction.org

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