# LESSON 1: GAINING INSIGHT WITH SOCIAL RESEARCH

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LESSON 1: GAINING INSIGHT WITH SOCIAL RESEARCH
**DMI 3I PRINCIPLES**

The 3i Principles are the foundation tenets of the Digital Marketing Institute’s framework for successful social media marketing. They stand for Initiate, Iterate, Integrate. Let’s take a look at what exactly each of these 3is mean.

**Initiate**

The Initiate principle means that your customer is the starting point and the finishing point for all your digital activities. Audience, competitor, cultural, and industry research are vital to see what your customers are doing online and how they are using specific channels. Many digital marketers are too quick to jump into digital and social channels without adequately researching what exactly their customers need. Take the time to find out what your customers are doing online before you develop an engagement strategy.

**Iterate**

Iteration is the process of assessing, amending, and creating new versions of a product or process, so that it becomes optimized over a period of time. Based on your learnings from the Initiate phase, you can edit your creative message, ad type, and perhaps even the channels you are using. The most successful digital marketers have a relentless commitment to iterative testing, learning, and scaling.

**Integrate**

This involves integrating all of your digital channels and also your traditional offline marketing activities, so that you can generate enough interest to make customers want to converse and then transact. For example, if you have a TV ad, make sure you include the hashtag you are using in your current social media campaigns to encourage online conversations.

**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL**

**What it means to be social**

People often use the terms ‘social media’ and ‘social’ to mean the same thing, but they are incorrect. Social media refers to the platforms and the applications where people are being social, whereas social refers to the interaction between people. A lot of brands think they’re being social, but in reality they’re just posting traditional ads on social media platforms. You can use three criteria in order to determine whether something is social or not.

- Is what you’re posting a two-way or multiple-way interaction? If you’re just posting to and outwards at someone, that’s not very social.
- Is the intent of your post to connect with people or build upon relationships? If you just want to push a message, that’s not very social either.
- Is the intention to add value to all parties participating? If it’s done only for your benefit, it’s not very social.
Wired to connect

Human beings are wired to connect. In his 2013 book titled Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect scientist Matthew Lieberman presents proof that social connections are as fundamental to human beings as food and water. This module is all about finding out what makes your audience tick and how to reach them through social media.

Role of a social media marketer

As a social media marketer, you use social media tools to connect to your audience socially, which should result in you selling products as well as getting subscribers and likes. But your fundamental role is to encourage and participate in interactions on social media. This means a lot of listening, as well as having discussions and positing questions that encourage two-way conversations. This will lead you to connect to people and build relationships with them, while all the time adding value to the parties participating.

IMPORcANCE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS

Value of social research

The value of social research really comes down to one thing: knowing your customer. Social research can help you become a better social media marketer because it will:

- Give you a deeper understanding of your audience and their culture
- Help you create better content for your audience
- Make you wiser and more informed about your budget and spending
- Allow you to create relationships with your target audience, driving word of mouth
- Help you to identify significant emerging market trends
- Help you to differentiate from your competition
- Help you create a Blue Ocean Strategy
- Inform successful social media strategies

Facts versus insights

What we’re looking for in research data are insights. Many marketers mistake facts for insights. Facts are valuable pieces of information that describe what has happened. But what we’re really looking for in research is why something happened. The fact may be that the average U.S. Facebook customer spends 40 minutes per day on the site, but the question is why? What is it about that particular site that makes people want to stick around that long? That is where insight comes into play. The insight reveals that Facebook is where most people’s friends come together on a regular basis and post updates about their lives. FOMO or the ‘fear of missing out’ drives people to go back time and time again to check up on what people are doing.

Insights drive strategy

With this motivation in mind, you can plan your social strategy to appeal to the Facebook audience’s desire for connection and their FOMO. Great insights can lead to incredible strategies.
**KEY COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL RESEARCH**

**How to uncover insights**

To uncover brilliant insights, the research that you do needs to cover all of the dimensions of the market, including:

- **Your audience**: Who are they? What motivates them? What keeps them up at night?
- **Your competition**: Not just direct competitors, but anybody that your audience pays attention to.
- **Industry trends**: What’s happening in your industry and also adjacent industries that you could learn from?
- **Cultural trends**: What’s happening in the world that may affect your strategy? How do you tap into local ideas?

**Snorkel/Scuba method**

But how can you cover so much ground without spending years reading through data and studies? Well, you can apply the snorkel/scuba method.

Imagine you are exploring a huge coral reef, like the Great Barrier Reef. You have to cover a lot of ground in a short amount of time. So you metaphorically put on your snorkel mask and start to skim the surface of the data. You are swimming over miles and miles of data and you are looking for that piece of coral or that fish or that special thing that will make you want to put on your scuba equipment and dive down and investigate.

Similarly, when you are doing research, you will be covering a lot of ground, but not everything will lead to an insight you can use. You have to be able to notice the glimmers of things that are out of the ordinary. Then you follow those leads.

**ESTABLISHING BRAND CAPABILITIES AND GOALS**

**Goals and KPIs**

When conducting research, you should focus on insights that lead you towards your goals. To do this effectively, ask yourself:

- **What stage is your company at?**
- **What would you like to achieve with your strategy?**

You can follow three steps to help you figure out your brand capabilities and goals:

- **Know what resources, talent, and budgets you have access to.**
- **Know what your limitations and your capabilities are.**
- **Be realistic in setting your KPIs.**
- **Sample KPIs**

In order to help you establish your KPIs, here are some sample KPIs that are aligned to the customer journey:
**Awareness.** If you're relatively unknown, you should focus on building awareness. Are people starting to hear about your company, even if they aren’t currently in the market for your product? You will want to build followers and engagement as a first step. Follows, engagement, web visits are good sample KPIs to measure at the awareness stage.

**Research and consideration.** If people are aware of your brand, but are comparing you to alternatives, you’ll want to know that they’re spending a good amount of time with your content, and that they’re getting answers to their questions to help them lean in your direction. Time on site, search queries, and rankings are good sample KPIs to measure at this stage.

**Purchase.** Your goal here is to make sure people are choosing your brand over others. Sales numbers, growth, and market share are good sample KPIs to measure at this stage.

**Experience.** If you have sales but are concerned about customer experience, and whether or not they are enjoying your brand, there are no better KPIs to measure than reviews, mentions, and feedback.

**Retention.** People can say what they like you, but are they buying again? Are they recommending you to friends? Repeat sales, recommendations, mentions, and public reviews are good sample KPIs to measure at the retention stage.

**Avoid setting multiple KPIs.** Set one core goal that could be measured across all of your efforts. You don’t want your goals to compete.
LESSON 2: AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND LISTENING TOOLS
AUDIENCE RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Brand as center

In the pre-Internet world, the brand was the center of the universe. Brands could establish a lot of credibility through advertising and other direct-to-customer tactics. But then the Internet came along and all of that changed.

Audience as center

The web and especially the social web has given customers the tools to spread information further and faster than ever before. In the social era, one customer voice can have as much of, or even more of an impact than your advertising campaigns. The audience is now at the center of the conversation. So we need to understand everything through the lens of the audience: what they love, what they hope for, who they follow, and, of course, what motivates them.

Forget about demographics

Knowing your customer is not about demographics any longer. The social web has given us tools to learn about the whole human being, rather than just their age, gender, and ethnicity. This whole person often cuts across demographics. You aren’t going to be studying millennials: you’re going to be looking into communities of interest, where you’ll find the affinities and passions that bond people together.

Demographics vs. psychographics

Demographics used to be thought of as a good way to categorize people. For example: men, aged 18 to 34, all like football. But it turns out that diversity within that segment is so vast that that sort of imperfect data doesn’t lead to really good insights. It’s important to get the idea of demographics which are statistical data, like gender and sex and education, out of your mind and start instead to think of psychographics. Psychographics is the study of personality, values, opinions, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles.

Community of interest

With the social web allowing people who share interests and passions to gather around those interest and passions, there are more and more places online for them to spend time and pay attention. So instead of describing your audience as demographic groups that you’re familiar with, such as millennial moms or boomer retirees, think of them in terms of gathering around interests or passions. They are a community of interest or a community of practice, and may interact or know one another only within that realm.

Dimensions of audience research

There are multiple dimensions of audience research to consider. These include:

- Attitude and behaviors
- Needs, wants, and goals
- Life stage
- Level of understanding
Narrowing your audience

When conducting research, it’s important to narrow your audience. You probably don’t have the budget to reach everyone. And you can’t speak to everyone at once. So you can either speak to a specific audience whose language and motivations you understand, whose passions you’re on board with, or you can create generic messages that may or may not hit their mark with anyone.

Narrowing an existing audience

If you already have an established customer base, you have an advantage. Whether they follow you on social media or you have a database full of customers, you can cross-reference their tastes, their desires, their comings and goings, and their motivations with all sorts of social intelligence tools. But you still need to narrow this audience.

So, think about your best customers: those who buy and buy repeatedly; those who love your product and use it all of the time; those who recommend your product to their networks and who are connected to a dense community of interest. Once you’ve narrowed this audience, use this smaller sample of group as the basis for your research.

Narrowing without an audience

If you’re starting out and don’t really have a customer base, then you’re going to need to find a customer within a community of interest who also needs your product or service. And finding a person isn’t easy. You’re going to need to access a series of social intelligence tools, social listening, and other research methods.

Community density

This leads to the concept of density. Density is the measurement of how concentrated the relationships are within a community of interest. Traditionally, before the web, density was the measurement of how geographically close people lived together in a community. But now with the web, density is about the number of connections between people, the number of interests they share in common, whether they meet offline, and so on.

Why density matters

Why does density even matter? Well, the best, most qualified leads come from referrals. And communities of high density are referral engines. As a rule, the higher the density of relationships within a community, the more messages and ideas will spread between the members of that community online and off.

Signals of density

Some signals of density include:
The number of people and activities within discussion groups. You'll find people online on tools such as Reddit, Facebook and LinkedIn, having discussions and conversations around their interests.

The number of connections between people within the group. Within each group, the number of people who are connected to each other also creates density.

The interactions and shared interests and passions between members of that group. If people within the group share multiple passions, they're more likely to spend more time together and more time discussing them.

The presence of offline meetups. Getting to the point where members go from being in a discussion group or a forum to meeting up face to face for coffee always deepens the relationships.

Factors leading to density

Here are some of the factors that lead to density:

- **Uncertainty.** Think about startup founders and other groups that have a lot of uncertainty ahead of them. They're going to gather to share advice more often.
- **Isolation and marginalization.** For example, women who join 'women in tech' groups often benefit from gathering and sharing tips and tricks, as well as helping to boost one another within the community.
- **Competition.** Sports team fans connect and bond over their rivalry with other sports teams.
- **High passion.** For example, adult coloring book enthusiasts who want to talk endlessly about their new-found passion.
- **Shared experiences.** This is where you'll find mommy bloggers who can share their experience of motherhood and feel connected, even though they're isolated.
- **Close contact.** For example, small town communities who can't help but bond with their neighbors.
- **Unique identities and taste.** Think about goths and punks, and anyone who identifies strongly with a style that isn't necessarily mainstream or accepted.
- **History.** For instance, the Jewish community who have strong historic ties and hardships to share over the years.
- **Time to kill.** This refers to teenagers and others who may seek out communities to spend free time and meet new people.

As the factors above increase, the community density increases. However, there's a point where group size also hurts density. For example, when towns become cities, community density dissipates. So small- to mid-size communities are the best to focus on.

Criteria for narrowing your audience focus

How do you qualify your audience? Consider the following:

- How dense is this community of interest? Keep in mind also that lack of density doesn’t necessarily mean that you should disqualify this community. It actually could create an opportunity. If you see an emerging community that requires leadership and cohesion, and you can add that value, it can be incredibly powerful.

- Are the members of this community in need of what you’re offering? This is a very fundamental question to ask yourself. If you see a fantastic, dense community, but they’re not in need of your product or service, you should probably not make them your core community of interest.
Do you have a connection to or experience with this community? You can definitely grow connections from scratch, but if you already share a passion or connections through a community, all the better.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH TOOLS

Tools of the trade

Let's look at the free social media analytics tools that are out there on platforms like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Twitter Analytics

Twitter has some of the most fascinating and robust analytics around. Your analytics home opens in a new tab or window. There, you will see a 28-day summary and highlights of your most popular tweets, mentions, number of new followers, profile views, etc. The tab at the top of the page called Audiences defaults to an overview and provides a lot of excellent data about your audience and their interests.

YouTube Analytics

YouTube's analytics are pretty extensive. To access them, go to your Creator Studio by, once again, clicking on your profile image in the top right corner and choosing Creator Studio. Then click on Analytics in the left-hand column to expand the options and then demographics.

Demographics aren't really very useful. However, you can take note of the fact that your audience seems to follow similar patterns to your Twitter followers. So you can probably assume that many of your Twitter followers are also subscribed to you on YouTube, and that the audience crosses over quite a bit.

Facebook Analytics

When you're on your page, click on the Insights tab at the top of the page, below the search bar. Then click on the People menu along the left-hand side to open up your demographics insights. Much like YouTube, there isn't much more here other than the demographics, information like age, country, and gender.

LinkedIn Analytics

Different analytics are provided depending on the type of page you have, whether it is a personal profile, a company page, or a group. If you are personally connected to a lot of people on LinkedIn, you should get a lot of interesting data from just your personal profile. You can actually start to scroll down this page and see the individuals who've looked at your profile. Or you can look at the statistics in the overview at the top, which will show you the titles and industries of the people that have looked at your profile.

If you have a business page, just click on the Analytics tab below the company name and logo bar. If you scroll down, you'll be able to get similar demographics for your page followers. Understanding the industry that your audience is in, their seniority and job title, can give you a great jumping off point for digging deeper.
Google Analytics

If your website gets a lot of traffic, Google Analytics will offer up some data on the interests of your audience. You can click into those categories as well to find out deeper behaviors like how much time they spend on your site and - if you have your Google Analytics set up right - whether or not they convert. This may help you understand who those valuable customers are and what they want.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

Social intelligence

Social intelligence tools can be used by anyone, whether you're just starting out or you have a well-established business. Social intelligence tools derive consumer and business insights from what people are talking about on social media channels. They allow you to be proactive and entirely customer-centric. Unlike social media monitoring, which focuses on what people are saying about your brand, social intelligence is more interested in finding out what people are talking about and interested in, in general.

Klear.com

Let's start with klear.com.

You have to sign in with your Twitter ID, but it offers some pretty powerful data for free. Just go to klear.com/signup and click Sign Up With Twitter. On the Influencers page, you can search for just about any skill in any location.

Influencer search

Klear offers up some sample scales and locations. So, for example, football, golf, and tennis in Sports, or actors, illustrators, and writers in Art. You can filter by influencers, friends, and celebrities who have verified accounts or a lot of followers; power users - people that are in the top 10% of Twitter users; casual users - people who are considered fairly engaged; and novice users - people who are pretty light users. You can also expand or switch locations, and also filter by gender or people versus brands.

Here are the results when filtered for people who are also power users (see slide 'Klear.com – influencer search'). From here, you can follow them on Twitter, look deeper into their analytics to see what kind of content they're sharing, who they talk with, and what their audience looks like.

This is a very useful tool to start with.

Affinio

Affinio is an excellent, but expensive tool for audience research. If you're part of an organization that has a budget for analytical tools, this is a good one to invest in.

My tribes

Here's the main page for a report on the Twitter handle @missrogue (see slide 'Affinio – my tribes'). When Affinio first runs the report, it pulls in all of the followers and splits them out into tribes, which is their word for communities of interest, as in Tribe 1, Tribe 2, Tribe 3, and so on. You have to name
these tribes based on the kind of data that you see attached to them. In this example, the tribes are represented by all the dots that are connected to one another in different colored groups.

They have been given identifiers, like Tech Geeks, Startups, and Lifestyle Bloggers. Your tribes, or communities of interest, relate directly back to understanding your audience so that you can understand it and build a rapport with them.

**Diving into a tribe**

If you choose the Startups tribe from the menu on the left and select the Overview tab on the top of the page, you'll see that within the bio keywords of this tribe, the Twitter users entered words like entrepreneur, tech, founder, cofounder, startups, and so on (see slide ‘Affinio – diving into a tribe’). The images on the right are the profile pictures of the accounts that this tribe follows on social media. If you scroll over them, you can see who they are and what their follower counts are. The hashtags they use are #startup, #startups, #entrepreneurs, #fintech, and so on. They follow venture capital firms, TechCrunch, other startup founders, and other accounts that talk about startups and entrepreneurs. All this data culminated in this community being named the startup tribe.

**Interests**

When you go into the Interest tabs, you see the breakdown of what they're interested in (see slide ‘Affinio – interests’). The left-hand column in gray shows the categories of the accounts that this tribe follows. Under Brands or types of companies that they follow, you see VCs, angel organizations, startup accelerators, and other startups. When you click Entertainment, you see that they enjoy TED Talks, South by Southwest, O'Reilly Media, Freakonomics, and other resources that are frequently followed by entrepreneurs.

**Celebrities**

Their celebrities are all venture capital firms and startup founders, not the typical type of celebrity. By isolating these tribes, you can identify unique interests and affinities within each of them.

**Density and shared interests**

If you go back to the Overview tab, you can see a few other data points that help you connect back to the idea of density (see slide ‘Affinio – density and shared interests’). These charts show you how interconnected and similar the members of these tribes are. The Australian followers, which are a pretty small tribe, are far denser than the other tribes. This means that they follow and talk amongst one another more often. They also have a pretty good number of shared interests, so by listening to them for a period of time, you'll be able to get all sorts of ideas on how to talk to them and reach them.

**Creating a new report**

But, what if you don't have many Twitter followers? Then, how do you use this tool? Well, you can:

- Look into someone else’s followers, or
- Use hashtags that you know are commonly discussed amongst your community of interest

To do this, just click Menu, select a New Report (see slide ‘Affinio – creating a new report’). Then, choose a social media network that you think the audience is most likely to be on. In this case, you
are using Twitter. Click Tweet Content to build a custom audience based on what people are tweeting about. Then, you can use a Boolean search to create parameters around that discussion.

A Boolean search is a type of search that allows users to combine keywords and operators such as AND, NOT, and OR, to further produce more relevant results. For example, a Boolean search could be ‘football’ AND ‘United Kingdom’. This would limit the search results to conversations that only contain those two keywords, United Kingdom and football. Or you can use a Boolean search, ‘football’ AND ‘soccer’, to expand your search to include both football and soccer.

**People who talk about healthcare in Canada**

Here, you can see the results of a search to discover people who were using the hashtags #cndhealth, or #cdnhealth, or #healthpoli (see slide 'Affinio – people who talk about healthcare in Canada'). The searcher was interested in finding out more about doctors in Canada, and she knew from her results in klear.com that healthcare influencers in Canada use those three hashtags.

**High density in politically charged discussions**

The results show that there is greater density amongst people using specific hashtags than amongst people who follow any particular user (see slide ‘Affinio – high density in politically charged discussions’). You can also see that the ‘Care Not Cuts’ conversations, which are based on a group of health professionals in Canada lobbying the government to stop cutting funding to healthcare, are extremely dense.

This is because they meet some of those drivers of density: uncertainty, high passion, shared experiences, and unique identities. The results also show that group members are extremely likely to respond to articles about the cuts that support their position. You could really use this information to connect with this audience and build rapport.

**Shared links**

When you dive into the Content section found in the Overview tab of the ‘Care Not Cuts’ conversation tribe, you see that the posts that this group shares and engages with most are the ones that support their position. Affinio gives you access to all sorts of data that you can pull from public conversations.

**Surveys**

You can also round out your audience research using surveys. The three things to keep in mind when doing surveys are:

- **Sampling.** Make sure you’re asking enough of the right people. This means that you should not be asking friends or colleagues, unless they’re in your target audience. You should seek out those in your community of interest who are potential customers to take surveys.

- **Structure.** Make sure that you’re asking the right questions and being precise about what you’re trying to find out from the audience. You don’t want to ask leading questions, but you do want to structure your questions in order to get insightful answers. Two types of questions can be used here: closed-ended and open-ended.

- **Scale.** The number of surveys you need to gather to feel confident about your results depends on the size of your potential audience.
There are a few terms you need to understand in order to calculate the number of surveys you need to collect.

- **Population size.** This is the total number of people in your potential target market.
- **Margin of error.** This is the percentage that describes how close the answers your sample gives are to the answers the overall population will give.
- **Confidence level.** This is how confident you will be about the margin of error.

As an example, say you need to gather information on the operating system your audience prefers. By your estimates, there are 400,000 potential customers in your target market. If you decide that the industry standard of 3% margin of error at 95% confidence level is appropriate, then you will need to get 1,065 completed surveys.

**Survey tools**

There are quite a few survey tools that you can use to host your surveys. A few of these are:

- SurveyMonkey
- Google Forms
- Wufoo Forms

The catch with these platforms is that you have to find a way to distribute the surveys to enough people in your audience.

This is great if you already have a significant following or a mailing list. If you don't have access to a large group of people in your audience, you might want to try some of the survey panel services that exist. They vary in expense, but they could really be worth your while. Some of the options out there are Google Consumer Surveys, Snap Surveys, and YouGov:

- **Google Consumer Surveys** leverages contextual targeting, offering up surveys after a few pre-qualifying questions.
- **Snap Surveys** has millions of potential panelists worldwide that you can target through behavioral characteristics and/or demographic information.
- **YouGov** was one of the early movers in the space and uses active sampling, which means their panelists are pre-qualified through a series of precise, sociodemographic and geographic information. They also weight their data with offline resources.

**AUDIENCE LISTENING TOOLS**

**Social listening**

If you really want to get to know your audience, you will have to engage in active listening over a period of time. It’s important to note here that you’re not listening for mentions of your brand or company by the audience. What you’re listening for is what matters to them in order to facilitate more personalized engagement.

**Finding relevant hashtags**

Finding relevant hashtags is another way of discovering new people in conversations. There are a few ways to find hashtags on Twitter.
In Klear and Affinio, you start to create a list of influencers. If you follow your list of influencers and participants in a community, you will start to recognize hashtags used on a regular basis.

If you haven’t come across hashtags that influencers and your audience are using, you can go to RiteTag and search for hashtags around a topic. They have a simple search on their home page that allows you to enter a topic and search for potential hashtags used to discuss that topic.

Another tool to search for potential hashtags is Keyhole. A quick search found on their home page will give you a snapshot of hashtags.

On Instagram, though there are tools you can use to find popular hashtags, the most effective way to research hashtags is through the native Instagram mobile application. It not only shows you the results for general hashtags, but it also suggests all sorts of other hashtags you should look into.

**Discussion groups**

Another great source for social listening are discussion groups. Discussion groups are usually present when a community has great density. Discussion groups exist on many social platforms and can be a great way to discover the culture of a community. Here are a few examples:

- LinkedIn groups.
- Reddit. Reddit is a huge group of discussion boards online. Within the board, there are hundreds of thousands of conversations around specific topics and these are called sub-Reddits. Within these sub-Reddits, you will find very enthusiastic, passionate members of communities of interest. There are sub-Reddits for pretty much every topic that you can imagine.
- Facebook groups.
- Google groups. Google groups work very much like Facebook and LinkedIn groups, although they usually communicate through email threads. You can find a Google group on pretty much any topic.

When you join these groups, make sure you turn your notifications on, as you can’t usually enter them into a social listening platform. By following them on a regular basis, you can find out what they’re most passionate about, so that you can facilitate more personal conversations down the line.

**Finding influencers across other networks**

Ensure you are covering off as many networks as possible when following your influencers and participants. They may be sharing things on various platforms that they aren’t sharing on Twitter. Are they on Medium, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Periscope, Pinterest, YouTube, LinkedIn, or Tumblr, and do they have a blog?

Most people use similar usernames and handles across all of their networks. But if not, you can usually search and locate them within the directory of each platform. It is important to try to find key influencers across various platforms because they may be sharing things on one platform that they’re not sharing on another.

**Monitoring tools**

You can use monitoring tools to help you track multiple users and conversations within your communities.
A social media monitoring tool assists you in following many people across various channels more easily. There are many of these tools available, including:

- Hootsuite
- Tint
- Tagboard
- Mention

When it comes to social, audiences shift over time. So keeping track of the audience discussion on these tools will help you to update your understanding along the way. You will need to make social listening an ongoing part of your role.

**Hootsuite**

Here are some screenshots of Hootsuite (see slide ‘Hootsuite’). In order to track across more than three social networks, you’ll need to upgrade to the paid pro version. You can use Hootsuite’s Streams tab to monitor different networks or communities.

There are a bunch of ways to set up your social listening in Hootsuite. But to start, you need to add social streams. So click on the ‘+ Add Stream’ button at the top of the page. A pop-up will appear asking you to either connect to various networks or choose a stream from one of your networks to add. You can add the list you have created or create a stream for a hashtag that you want to follow.

There are also several apps within Hootsuite that allow you to add extra analysis on the discussions, helping you see who are the most influential people, which hashtags are emerging, shifting word clouds, and so on.

**Tint**

Tint makes a really lovely social listening dashboard. Nasdaq even uses Tint as its big social listening dashboard. You can create dashboards across multiple networks based on hashtags, users, groups, lists, and more depending on the network.

**Tagboard**

Tagboard is incredibly simple to set up, but you can only follow one stream at a time, and if you want to set up a permanent tagboard to track, you’ll have to pay. To set it up, just go to tagboard.com and type a hashtag into the search box. The result will be a real-time stream of all of the social media from across various platforms that use that hashtag. The advantage of Tagboard is that, after you create a tagboard, you can share it with your entire team so that everyone can follow along and get to know the audience better.

**Native social listening**

Monitoring natively involves following everyone that you can and immersing yourself in the conversation for a few weeks. Most people will say this is unrealistic, but it is the best way to understand what’s going on and get a full picture of the members of a community. Social listening in real time allows you to get into your social groove. It gives you greater insights into the people that you’re following and also creates opportunities for social connection in real time.
So if, say, there's a community member in the list looking for a great restaurant in a city that you know really well and you know some great restaurants, you can jump in at that time and create a connection with that user by offering up your suggestions. The more helpful you are, the more that you'll build rapport that will really come in useful over time.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

Attitudes and behaviors

Some of the dimensions you will be looking for are the attitudes and behaviors of people within a community.

- An attitude is a set of emotions, beliefs, and experience that the audience brings with them toward a particular object, person, thing, or event. Examples of attitudes are, “I get stressed out over holidays,” or “I’m afraid of spiders.” Attitudes are usually the result of past experiences, lack of past experiences, or outside influence. Attitudes determine behavior.
- Behavior is the way that somebody acts because of their attitude. Examples of behaviors affected by attitudes are, “I eat more and drink more during the holidays to reduce my stress,” and “I run and scream when I see a spider.”

Attitudes and behaviors change, but only when there’s an intrinsic motivation to change them.

Needs, wants, and goals

- A need is basic. It’s what people believe they require like food, and shelter, and water.
- A want is more of a luxury. You may need food, but what you want is to eat at a local farm-to-table restaurant.
- A goal is something which someone has in their life. So you may need shelter, but you set a goal to buy a nice house in a nice neighborhood.

Different cultures have different definitions of what needs, wants, and goals are. It’s important to understand the needs, wants, and goals of a particular culture in order to help you determine your messaging for that audience. If you can appeal to a need, want, or goal, you will capture the attention of that potential customer.

Beyond Maslow – hierarchy of needs

A popular theory of needs is by Abraham Maslow. It’s known as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. This theory demonstrates that certain needs are more fundamental than others and once those needs have been taken care of, people will work their way up the pyramid. So if you’re hungry, for instance, self-actualization is far beyond your immediate goals.

In different cultures, there are different needs that are defined. Understanding that these needs are relative to a specific audience will help you frame your proposition when approaching them.

Identifying goals related to your brand

Apart from understanding that different communities have different needs, you should also be on the lookout for the goals and the wants related to your brand. This does not mean that you’re scanning for opportunities to jump in and pitch your product to someone though. What it does mean is that
you're learning how to create content and messaging in a language that speaks to those wants and goals.

**Levels of understanding**

Understanding where your audience lies in the spectrum of knowledge about your product offering or brand is extremely important. If they are experts in the area, you’ll lose them with 101 messages. If they’re beginners, you don’t want to go over their heads. So when it comes to knowledge in the area of your industry, consider the four levels of understanding:

- **Novice/beginner.** This means having zero to little knowledge. So you’ll need to stick to the basics.
- **Basic understanding.** This means having a little bit of knowledge. So don’t start at the very beginning, but also don’t get too technical.
- **Advanced knowledge.** This means don’t waste your time with the basics, start to get technical.
- **Expert.** You’ll need to speak to this audience through their peers. And not the popular ones - the ones that are highly respected in the community.

**Brand affinities**

Another dimension to note is brand affinity. This is not limited to your industry. Looking across all of the brand affinities that your audience has, will help you get a better understanding of the whole person.

Knowing what other brands your audience is interested in can give you all sorts of ideas on how to reach them, bond with them, and build trust with them.

**General interests**

You need to understand the broader interests of your audience too. For example, where they find affinities in categories such as popular culture, sports, and hobbies. Once you understand their broader interests, you can create more relevant content for them.

You can get interests from tools such as Twitter Analytics, Affinio, and social listening. In the example (see slide ‘General interests’), you can see that the audience is interested in technology and entrepreneurship. So you know what kind of content is going to appeal to them. It also helps you understand how to speak to them in order to build relationships.

**Motivations – why people share**

What motivates an audience and stirs them to share content? Different audiences respond to different types of content. Jonah Berger in his book Contagious, Why Things Catch On provides a classification of shareable content:

- **Social currency.** Sharing this will make me look smarter, cooler, funnier, hipper.
- **Triggers.** I want to share this because it reminds me of something familiar and comfortable.
- **Emotions.** I want to share this because it made me feel something or it blew my mind.
- **Public.** I want to share this so that I can find my tribe.
- **Practical value.** I want to share this because I learned something from this, and I think you'll learn something from this too.
Stories. I want to share this because I connected to the story.

Are there any patterns that you can find in the content that people are sharing that follow this classification? By recognizing people’s motivations for sharing, you not only discover their interests, but you can tap into them when creating your own content and personalizing your social media messaging.
LESSON 3: COMPETITIVE AND INDUSTRY RESEARCH
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Narrowing the competition

Through your audience research, you would have been able to identify many of the brands and other sources that your audience is paying attention to. You can use this information to figure out who your real competition is and whether they’re serving your desired audience fully.

Your competition won’t only be the direct competitors that you’re familiar with. Your audience is paying attention to all sorts of media outlets, influencers, other brands, and movements.

For example, if you are a company that sells chemical hair straighteners to African-American audiences, you won’t only be competing with other hair straighteners; you’ll also be in competition with the natural hair movement, which promotes not using chemicals on African-American hair.

Apathy and cynicism

Another competitive consideration is how motivated your audience is. Apathy and cynicism in your particular category could also affect your messaging. If your audience feels apathetic or cynical towards your category of product, you may want to speak to that cynicism or apathy in your messaging.

What you are looking for

With competitive research, you’re looking to answer:

agog What are my competitors doing to reach their audience? Is it working? What works? This is about researching both what your competition is doing, as well as what they’re not doing.

agog Who is in their audience? Is it the same as yours? How well do they connect with this audience? It’s about finding out which audiences your competition serves and doesn’t serve well.

You will also be looking for opportunity gaps in order to create a ‘blue ocean strategy’ – one that has less competition and more unique value for your audience.

COMPETITIVE RESEARCH TOOLS

Research toolbox

Competitive research tools include:

agog Social media metrics
agog Social intelligence
agog Content audits and analysis
agog Search – news/video, online articles, interviews, and case studies

Framework/spreadsheet

Before researching the competition, it’s a good idea to create a spreadsheet so that you can compare apples to apples when it comes to things like budget and reach.
It’s also good to have a framework for your research for qualitative data, such as primary market and content strategy. This way, as you dig deep into each competitor’s profile, you know exactly what you are looking for. Your framework is likely to shift over the course of your research and analysis.

Sometimes, later in the process, you may stumble across a piece of information that will send you back to look for the same information in the brands you’ve already covered. Research is never linear. You can use the headings in the example as a guideline for creating your own spreadsheet (see slide ‘Framework/spreadsheet’).

**Social media metrics**

One way in which you can get a sense of how well the competition is doing in reaching its audience is to measure their results. There are social media metrics tools that you can use to input a page or an account that you do not have admin access to, in order to get an overview of their metrics, including:

- Polygraph Media
- Simply Measured
- Mention

What you’re looking for with these tools is not only the basic numbers - followers, likes, and so on - but also the content that your competitors are sharing.

**Polygraph (polyscore)**

For instance, here is a shot of the kind of data that you can pull when you connect a competitor’s Facebook page to Polygraph (see slide ‘Polygraph (polyscore)’). You can see the kind of content that has done well, what format it’s in, and are able to actually open the posts to take a look at them. This is a lot faster than scrolling through years and years of data on a brand’s Facebook page.

**Hootsuite**

In Hootsuite, you can add additional listening tabs for your competitors, to keep track of their mentions and activities:

- **Step 1**: Create a new tab on your Hootsuite dashboard. You can either create one tab for all your competitors, or one for each, if they have a lot of properties.
- **Step 2**: Click Add Stream and choose the Search tab. In the Search query box, enter your competitor’s account name, for example ‘@sephora’. This will show all the people mentioning your competitor’s brands.
- **Step 3**: You can also track your competitor’s Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, WordPress, and Instagram pages by clicking the Page Search tab and selecting the relevant social media option. This will show you every post they share and interactions with those posts. Optionally, you can also track hashtags across the various networks that are related to your competitors. Now you can follow along with audience interactions with your competitor’s social activity.

**Social Mention**

Social Mention is like Google but for social mentions. It searches across blogs, microblogs, images, and videos that mention a brand or phrase.
All you do is go to the home page, type in a search for your competitor, and it will display all of the mentions of that competitor. You can use advanced search to narrow the type of content that you’re searching for. For example, if you only want to see all the images that are posted to blogs related to your competitor, you can narrow the search by images and blogs.

Klear.com

Klear, for competitive research, straddles the social media metrics tools and the social intelligence tools. It’s brilliant for just typing in the Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook handle of any of the competitors you’d like to analyze and getting an analysis of their content, their engagement, which celebrities follow them, and their demographics. You could also set up competitive monitors to track how you’re doing in comparison.

Affinio

Affinio also has the capability to do a competitive analysis based on the analysis of multiple accounts at once.

In this example (see slide ‘Affinio – tribes across brands’), the top 10 London department stores are analyzed to find out how each store performs amongst interest-based communities. It provides an overview of the tribes who like department stores. Some of these include moms, interior designers, and beauty bloggers.

The small dots represent the tribe members, and the size of the colored areas represent the size of the tribe. The lines between the colored areas show any sort of crossover or cross-pollination between the tribes.

When you compare the market share for each department store, you start to see which audience each store appeals to most (see slide ‘Affinio – different stores, different tribes’). Interior designers love Liberty and Fenwick. Foodies love Fortnums the most. And beauty bloggers love Fenwicks. You can find these charts under the Competitive tab in the report.

Content audits

After you use the tools to gather the data, you’ll be able to do a content audit. A content audit is the process of evaluating content elements and information assets on a part of or all of a website. What you want to assess is:

- **Top content.** What content performs best, i.e. has the biggest reach, gets the most likes, shares, and so on.
- **Content mix.** This refers to the media of the content, i.e. audio, video, image, text.
- **Content strategy.** This is who competitors are targeting with their content.
- **Content frequency.** This is how often competitors are posting their content to the different networks.
- **Paid versus organic.** You can usually tell if something has high reach and high engagement or high reach and low engagement. Most often, the high reach, low engagement content is paid for.
- **Anything that is out of the ordinary.** For instance, if a competitor has a bump in engagement over a period of time and it doesn't look paid for, how did they strike a nerve with the audience?
You’ll also want to take stock of content across their various platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, newsletter, white papers, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat, Periscope, and more.

What you’re trying to discover is mostly what their strategy is, who their audience is, and how well it’s working.

Search

You can also find a lot of the other data you need through search. Through articles, interviews, and case studies, you can usually find the information you need to fill in any gaps in your research, like budgets, tactics, and staff.

Sites like Contently does a lot of research on clients and non-clients that can be quite revealing. Video search will also bring up interviews and presentations from members of your competitor’s digital team, where they’ll often go into their own case studies, revealing great information.

Google News Alerts

In order to stay on top of the news and events around your competitors, you can also set up an alert on Google news search, where you can have anything new delivered to your inbox daily or weekly, as you prefer.

**COMPETITIVE RESEARCH COMPONENTS**

**What are you looking for?**

As you conduct your research project, keep these questions in the back of your mind:

- **Who is the audience that this competitor is focused on?** For instance, are they talking to moms? Are they beauty bloggers? Sports fans?
- **What is their strategy to reach this audience?** Say, for instance, they’re looking to target beauty bloggers; perhaps they’re trying to build trust with this audience by offering helpful content.
- **What tactics are they using?** Using the example of beauty bloggers again, you’d note that the competitors are offering makeup tutorials on Instagram and YouTube.
- **How successful are the tactics working to achieve their goals?** Are the beauty bloggers actually interacting with this content and sharing it?

Comparing the inputs and outputs

Other important information for you to find out about your competitors is what sort of resources, budgets, and staff they have access to, and what their capabilities are. This isn’t always easy data to find, as most companies keep it hidden. However, using article search or through YouTube presentations, you can sometimes tease out this very sensitive information.

**Content/audience gap analysis**

Finally, you should be able to start creating a gap analysis. This isn’t the traditional gap analysis, where you’re comparing your actual performance with your desired performance. Rather, it’s more of
an analysis of what your competitors are doing to find out where there are gaps: in content, in audience needs, in niche audiences that you could possibly serve better.

**Y-axis**

Down the Y-axis, list all the potential tribes that are interested in your product category. You will know this from the audience research that you've already done whether through Affinio, Klear, or manually. So, for instance, if you're selling a new tea brand, you would want to know the tribes that buy tea on a regular basis. They could be fashion enthusiasts, fitness and health enthusiasts, dieters, traditional tea drinkers, foodies, or socially conscious buyers.

**X-axis**

On the X-axis, list the content topics and types that competitors use to reach these audiences. Teavana, a popular North American brand, focuses on fashion, and fitness and health enthusiasts, with lots of bright, attractive images across platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter that convey a hip cool image. Fill in the spots along the X-axis on the ‘fashion’ and ‘fitness and health’ enthusiasts for Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter.

Another tea brand is Bewley’s, a popular Irish brand, which focuses on foodies, socially conscious buyers, and traditional tea drinkers. They focus on Facebook and Twitter using more community and consciousness-raising images.

**Identifying underserved audiences**

After filling in the axis with the various competitors, you will see who are the underserved audiences and platforms that you could focus on if you want a ‘blue ocean strategy.’ And understanding how your competitors speak to their audiences will also help inform your future content strategy.

**INDUSTRY TREND RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

Industry trends are the changes and advancements that are taking place in and around your industry category. In a nutshell, industry trends are those potentially disruptive technological advances or entrants that don’t seem like they’ll be a threat, but which you should keep an eye on.

**FinTech example**

An example of this is in the financial industry with FinTech. Robo-advisors like Wealthfront and WiseBanyan may seem like unlikely candidates for a person’s money handling, but after years of losing faith in traditional banks and getting angry with the excesses of Wall Street, studies have shown that the next generation actually trusts these tech startups more than traditional financial institutions. A digital marketer who does not recognize the potential disruptions here will miss the mark on a strategy if they ignore these factors. You need to be staying ahead of these trends, to ensure that you don’t fall behind your competition.

**What are you looking for?**

As well as reading articles and case studies, engaging in social listening, and more, you need to be looking out for the following when it comes to industry trends:
Disruptions in your industry. For example, a customer could be launching a new way to connect with customers that could completely change customer expectations.

New technology or advancements in ideas or culture that could affect your industry. For example, people tracking their own health metrics using technology could affect a pharmaceutical strategy.

Shifting interests amongst the influencers and thought leaders in your industry. For instance, if you see thought leaders leaving an industry for another one, or thought leaders pointing to trends in another industry, this knowledge could be applied.

If you know the potential disruptions, you can get ahead of them and even leverage them to your own advantage.

Research tools

The tools that can be used for industry trend analysis are:

- Industry trend reports
- Industry newsletters and publications
- Emerging technology newsletters and publications
- Industry thought leaders
- Google news alerts for industry news

INDUSTRY TREND RESEARCH TOOLS

Industry trend reports

Industry trend reports are in-depth studies of each industry and are highly valuable. Industry trend reports can be very expensive to subscribe to. However, many of them have newsletters as well as subscription models.

- Euromonitor. They provide not only consumer reports, but industry reports as well. They generally publish industry reports quarterly, which evaluate trends and shifts.
- Hoovers. These reports are very thorough, but they'll probably set you back a few thousand dollars.
- IBIS. These are UK-based and, much like Euromonitor and Hoovers, they do quarterly industry trend reports that are fantastically thorough, but costly.

Industry newsletters and publications

Newsletters and blogs can be a great way to get free and up-to-date information, as well as be notified on reports you may want to spend money on. You can go down two paths when looking for these:

- Independent newsletters and publications. Depending on your industry, you’ll need to search around for these. You can try klear.com and Search.
- Consulting groups. Depending on your industry, there are some consulting groups that specialize in creating industry studies. You can find many of these through your social listening and search, as people often share what they're reading and lead you there.
Tech newsletters

Sometimes your industry may lag a little bit behind when it comes to looking at emerging trends in tech and culture. So it’s also very helpful to follow along with general technology newsletters and publications, to get a sense of what is going on in the industries around you. Some of the top ones include:

➡ TechCrunch
➡ ReadWrite Web
➡ The Next Web
➡ CNet
➡ BBC Technology

Following industry thought leaders

You’ve probably already created a list of thought leaders that are influential to your audience, but you can expand and create more lists in other verticals.

Your industry in general

People within your own industry may not be influential to your audience, and they may even be competitors, but they may be on top of technology and trends in your industry. They could be leaders of organizations, writers for publications, and researchers or speakers.

Technology influencers list

You can also create a technology influencers list. You can find these thought leaders on Klear.com, you can scan Twitter for existing lists of thought leaders, and you can watch on social listening tools for mentions and re-tweets of articles by thought leaders that you may have missed before.

Google news alerts

You can create a Google news alert by identifying keywords used by journalists when talking about innovation in your industry. Each industry is a little bit different. However, once you start reading more newsletters and following more thought leaders, you’ll get a better sense of the kind of language used that you should follow.
LESSON 4: CULTURAL RESEARCH TOOLS
CULTURAL RESEARCH OVERVIEW

What is cultural research?

Cultural research involves investigating the ways in which culture creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations, and power. Culture is deeply tied to communities of interest. Within every community of interest, there are unique cultural characteristics and trends. These cultural characteristics and trends will help to uncover insights that will lead to better social media strategies for reaching your audience.

Components of cultural research

Within cultures, the unique characteristics you’ll be looking for are:

- **Geographic influences.** Culturally, different areas of the world have different attitudes. For example, Japan is often called the Galapagos of culture, because it is so far removed from other land masses.
- **Influential figures and movements.** These are the people and movements that affect how the culture will think about certain topics. For example, Harvey Milk was an American politician in the 1960s, whose very public activism set the stage for San Francisco to think more progressively than the rest of the country about LGBT rights.
- **Language and memes.** These are the idioms, acronyms, and other manifestations of language within each culture. Just think of acronyms you use in various business contexts that will seem like a completely different language for outsiders. Memes are the cultural ideas that are born and travel through distinctive cultures.
- **Historic and current news.** The history of a culture of people will inform current events.
- **Rules and mores.** There are often multiple unwritten rules within cultures. For example, when greeting Japanese business people, you should always bring a gift.

CULTURAL RESEARCH TOOLS AND COMPONENTS

Tools

Cultural research tools include:

- Social media listening
- Social intelligence tools
- Research papers, online articles, and case studies
- Online message boards and communities

However, you also need to assess some new dimensions.

Geography

Different geographic areas still have very unique cultures. A tool like Trendsmap will help you uncover the culture of a specific location. Just go to trendsmap.com and search a location that you’re interested in. A map will then appear showing you the trending topics on Twitter in that area. The free account, even without registering, will give you a good snapshot of what people are tweeting about in geographic locations. But if you register you can get even more data.
Influential figures and movements

The other dimension of cultural research you need to assess is influential figures and movements. This goes far beyond who people follow on Twitter or Facebook, though it can be reflected there. These figures and movements are highly influential. They set the conversation. They determine the news items. They act as the authoritative voice for members of the culture.

Steve Jobs

In the case of Steve Jobs, for instance, many of his practices around design are seen as gospel for designers and product managers worldwide. He’s often quoted by designers to validate design direction.

Linus Torvalds

Linus Torvalds created the operating system, Linux, and has been a popular figure in the open source developer movement. When Linus speaks at a conference or tweets something significant, the developer world takes notice and will adopt his lessons almost instantly.

Social intelligence reports

This information will be revealed in your social intelligence reports through Affinio and Klear, as well as through social listening through Hootsuite, Mention, and TINT. You will see the hashtags related to the movements that matter emerging in the reports, and you will recognize them coming up in various conversations time and time again as you are listening.

Language

Many cultures have their own language. This doesn’t just refer to the broader languages like English, Spanish, and French, but also to the insider language spoken by groups. This could include:

- Slang
- Acronyms
- Jargon
- Nicknames
- Codes
- Idioms
- Expressions
- Textspeak

Being able to decipher insider language and then speak it authentically is an important part of fitting in.

Memes

There are also memes that can only be deciphered through a deep knowledge of a culture. A meme could be anything from a ritual, to a joke, to a superstition. Knowing which memes are meaningful to a culture can help decode everything from humor, to rules, to rituals within a group.

Understanding memes will also help you understand what not to do. The Twitter account Brands Saying Bae makes fun of brands who try too hard to be ‘down with the kids’. Not understanding the
nuances of cultural language and trying to mimic it can lead to terrible results. The audience isn’t stupid. They can see right through brands who haven’t done their homework.

Historic and current events

Understanding the history, as well as the current events, in a culture will also help you understand what shapes and influences people’s attitude within that culture. This will help you gain credibility as you reference history and stay ahead of the popular news. Sports is a great example of this. You don’t just talk about a football player without knowing the history of that player.

Rules and mores

Every culture has its own set of unwritten rules and mores. These are standards of conduct that, if stumbled over, could become a huge problem for a brand.

There are two levels of rules: explicit rules and implicit rules.

- **Explicit rules** are the laws, the codes of conduct, terms of use, community guidelines, and other rules that are written down; if you break them, they are usually enforced with some sort of policing. So, for instance, on Facebook, if you post hate language, your account will be removed.

- **Implicit rules** are a lot more nuanced. These rules are usually unwritten and the punishment for breaking them is community ostracization. So, for instance, in one culture, you might greet someone with a gift. And in another culture, it’s with a double cheek kiss. In another culture, it’s with a handshake. Crossing over any of those barriers could be awkward.

Online, it works exactly the same. Different platforms, as well as communities within those platforms, have their own rules and mores. For instance, on Twitter, it’s generally frowned upon to overload your tweet with hashtags unless it’s a joke. People will see overloading your tweet with hashtags as a plea for attention and write you off as a self-promoter.
LESSON 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY
ANALYZING DATA TO FIND INSIGHTS

What are you looking for?

Insights are about answering the why and not the what. By now, you will have a lot of ‘what’ gathered. The ‘why’ is found through human analysis. You will need to pull all of the components of your research together to find the common threads, overlaps, and trends within your data. There are some processes you can use to help you do this.

Creating a SWOT analysis

The first process you can use is a SWOT analysis.

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Though many SWOT analyses are created by looking at your competition, this one is more centered on your audience.

↑ **Strengths.** Where do your assets and values overlap with your audience? Where can you find strong, common ground? What is it that will make you a clear choice?
↑ **Weaknesses.** Are there any audience perceptions that could hurt you in their eyes? Where are your values, offerings, products, and services incongruent with your audience needs and wants?
↑ **Opportunities.** If this is an audience that is untapped, there could be an opportunity that you didn't recognize at first. Or, if you're established, maybe there's a new angle to reignite an old conversation.
↑ **Threats.** What are the cultural threats, emerging attitudes, industry threats, emerging technologies?

Onlyness

According to thought leader and Harvard Business writer Nilofer Merchant, the way we create value has changed. It's not enough to offer a unique angle or just to be differentiated. In the social era, where everyone can be a publisher and choice is endless, 'onlyness' is that thing that will make you stand out. Your onlyness refers to that unique point of view and experience that only you can bring to the table. It's your experience, your knowledge, your history, your vision, your passion, and everything else that makes you uniquely you.

As a digital marketer, you know your product, service, company, history, and so on, inside out. At the end of the day, what you offer your audience can only come from you.

Finding your sweet spot

↑ Once you find your onlyness or your unique point of view or offering, draw a circle and name it.
↑ Then, draw a second circle that overlaps yours realistically. This is where your onlyness and point of view meets your audience’s interests and needs.
↑ The third circle that you draw is where you remove part of that overlap.
↑ What is left over? That’s your sweet spot, the place where your goals and your onlyness and your passion overlap with your audience’s needs and wants and passions, but where there is no major competition.
Turning data into insights

Now, taking all of your data together, see if patterns are emerging in specific areas. Then, look for strong relationships between the data points, such as connections between tribes, connections between competitors and tribes, and connections between the data points themselves. Also look for surprising anomalies in the data, things that you didn’t expect to happen or seem a little out of place.

Even the best research doesn’t always tell the whole story. Sometimes there is a story between the threads, so try to read between the lines. Finally, you should ask the five whys of data.

The Five Whys

The five whys refer to the number of questions that you have to ask of your initial insights to get to the nugget of the insight that will drive your strategy. The first statement you make will probably not be in-depth enough to lead to an actionable insight, so you have to ask why several times to uncover the deep insight. Five times is recommended, hence the five whys.

STRATEGIC STATEMENTS

Defining a strategic statement

A strategic statement sums up a company’s long-term core strategy. It should be something you can go back to time and time again to check whether a tactic or approach aligns with your strategy. It should be clear and straightforward, not full of jargon or promises.

Structuring a strategic statement

Strategic statements should be structured under the following three headings:

- **Audience**: Who are the intended recipients of the message?
- **Differentiator**: How is the company unique from its competition?
- **Success metric**: How are we going to measure how the strategy is working?

Link your statement to each heading by asking these three questions:

- Who is my core audience?
- Why would they care about my product?
- What am I measuring as my core success metric?

The mark of a great strategy

The mark of a great strategy built off solid insights is that it can power the rest of your social media strategy, whether it’s messaging, paid advertising, content marketing, integrations or engagement.

Finally, keep in mind that social research is never complete.