

The Cultures of New Media (DGM 715)

Prepared by

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Lecture No.10



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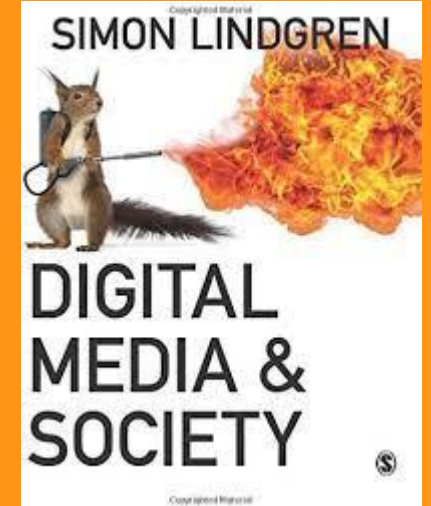


Lecture 10

The content of Lecture 10

The lecture 10 sheds light on a number of important topics, including the following:

1. The Data Environment
2. Different types of data
3. Methodological Bricolage
4. What is social media data?
5. Why should you collect social media data?
6. Social media analytics: why is it so important?
7. Picking the best social media analytics tool



First, let's think about what types of information we may be dealing with.

Big data has become a buzzword that is repeatedly used to name and characterise some of the new types of data that have emerged in a digital society.



In reality, however, the emergence of big data is only one of many transformations in our data environment, which affects opportunities as well as challenges when doing digital social research.



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The Data Environment

For example, Kingsley Purdam, an expert in research methods, and his data scientist colleague Mark Elliot aptly point out that what is commonly known as ‘big’ data is in fact data defined by several other things, rather than just its large size: it registers things as they happen in real time, it offers new possibilities to combine and compare datasets, and so on.



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The Data Environment

Furthermore, Purdam and Elliot believe that even these characterisations are still not sufficient.

This is because those definitions still seem to assume that data is 'something we have, when in fact 'the reality and scale of the data transformation is that data is now something we are becoming immersed and embedded in' (Purdam & Elliot 2015: 26).



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The notion of a 'data environment' underlines that people today are at the same time generators of, but also generated by, this new environment.

Instead of people being researched', Purdam and Elliot (2015: 26) say, 'they are the research. Their point, more concretely, is that new data types have emerged — and are constantly emerging — that demand new flexible approaches.



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The Data Environment

Doing digital social research, therefore, often entails discovering and experimenting with challenges and possibilities of ever-new types and combinations of information.

The most important point here is that while social research traditionally relies on intentional data (1), such as surveys and interviews, digital society has enabled much more far-reaching registration and collection of participative intentional data (2), consequential data (3), self-published data (4), and found data. These are types of data that indeed existed before digitally networked tools and platforms but which have been expanded and accentuated.



The remaining types — social media data (5), data traces (6), and, at least chiefly, synthetic data (8) — are specific to digital society. Therefore, researchers who analyse this society face dramatically altered conditions for the generation and gathering of data about social processes and interactions.



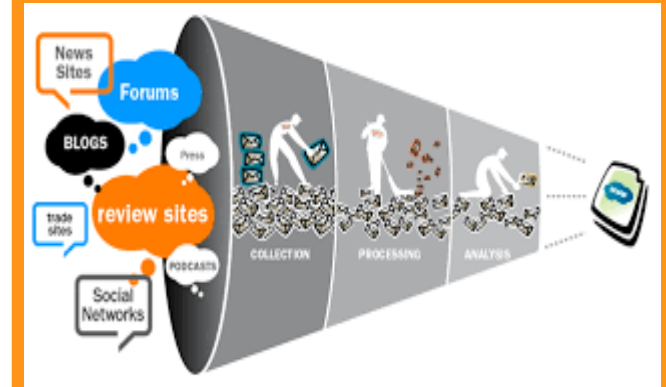
In trying to describe the ever-changing data environment, Purdam and Elliot (2015: 28–29) outline an eight-point typology of different data types based on how the data in question has been generated:

1. traditional intentional data: Data collected and used with the respondent's explicit agreement. All so-called traditional social science data (e.g. survey, focus group or interview data and also data collected via observation) would come into this category. New traditional methods continue to be developed.

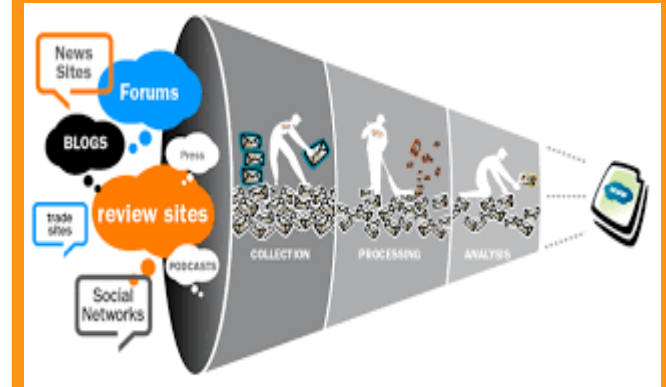


2. Participative intentional data: In this category data are collected through some interactive process. This includes some new data forms such as crowdsourced data [...].

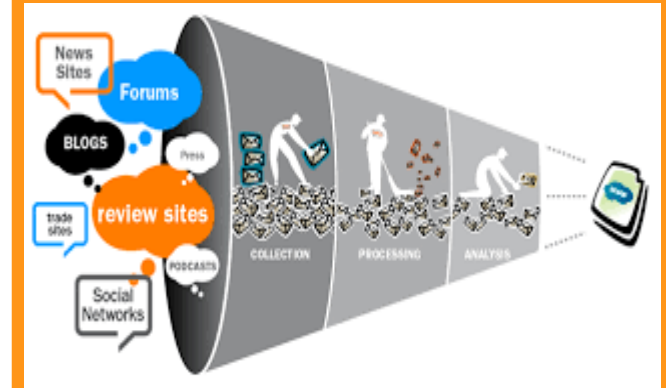
3. Consequential data: Information that is collected as a necessary transaction that is secondary to some (other) interaction (e.g. administrative records, electronic health records, commercial transaction data and data from online game playing all come into this category).



4. Self-published data: Data deliberately self-recorded and published that can potentially be used for social science research either with or without explicit permission, given the information has been made public (e.g. long-form blogs, CVs and profiles).



5. Social media data: Data generated through some public, social process that can potentially be used for social science research either with or without permission (e.g. micro-blogging platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, and, perhaps, online game data).



6. Data traces: Data that is 'left' (possibly unknowingly) through digital encounters, such as online search histories and purchasing, which can be used for social science research either by default use agreements or with explicit permission.



7. Found data: Data that is available in the public domain, such as observations of public spaces, which can include covert research methods.

8. Synthetic data: Where data has been simulated, imputed or synthesized. This can be derived from, or combined with, other data types.

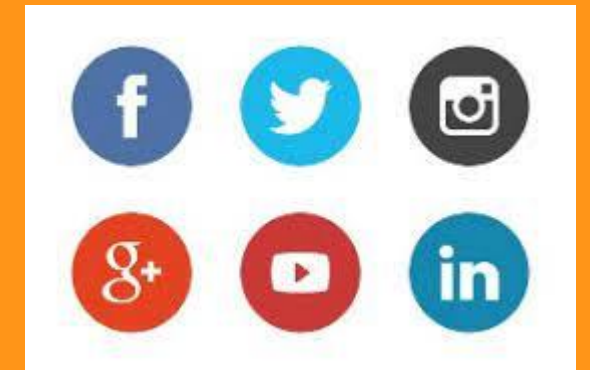


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Methodological Bricolage

Research on digital society has continued to be a trading zone between conventional academic disciplines — it is truly transdisciplinary. In their book about ‘internet inquiry’, Annette Markham and Nancy Baym (2009: xiv) explain that:

While most disciplines have awakened to an understanding of the importance of the internet in their fields, most do not have a richly developed core of scholars who agree on methodological approaches or standards. This absence of disciplinary boundaries keeps internet studies both desirable and frustrating.



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Methodological Bricolage

This frustration, they argue, makes researchers of digital society push the boundaries of 'disciplinary belonging' in ways that most academic research would benefit from doing more of.

Furthermore, they write that as very few internet researchers have been specifically trained in how to do it well, one is by necessity forced to actively and critically navigate a landscape of old and new methods in order to seek out ways of engaging with data that suit one's particular project.



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Methodological Bricolage

It is seldom workable to just apply previously existing theories and methods when studying digital society. Some perspectives and approaches can most likely be, and have also to some extent been, repurposed for digital media research — for example, survey methods and interviews.

But one must remember that the internet, and its networked social tools and platforms, is in many ways a different research context, possessing an ‘essential changeability’ that demands a conscious shift of focus and method (Jones 1998b: xi).



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Methodological Bricolage

Because of this, researching digital society often demands that the person carrying out the data collection and analysis is even more critical, and more reflective, than what is already demanded by scholarship in general.

The specific challenges of doing digital social research have, Markham and Baym (2009: vii–viii) argue, ‘prompted its researchers to confront, head on, numerous questions that lurk less visibly in traditional research contexts’.



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Methodological Bricolage

One such issue is the urgent need to address the longstanding dispute in social science between 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' methodological approaches, which has persisted, apparently unresolvable, for more than a century.

Among researchers, there are still traces of a battle between case-oriented interpretative perspectives, on the one hand, and variable-oriented approaches focused on testing hypotheses on the other.



Scholars who prefer case-oriented methods will argue that in-depth understandings of a smaller set of observations are crucial for grasping the complexities of reality, and those who prefer variable-oriented approaches will argue that only the highly systematised analysis of larger numbers of cases will allow scholars to make reliable statements about the 'true' order of things.



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Methodological Bricolage

Today, however, there is an increasingly widespread consensus that the employment of combinations of 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' methods is a valid and recommended strategy, which allows researchers to benefit from their various strengths and balance their respective weaknesses.

The 'qualitative' tradition is seen as the more inductively oriented interpretative study of a small number of observations, while the 'quantitative' tradition is



characterized by the deductively oriented statistical study of large numbers of cases. This has given rise to the common notion that 'qualitative' research produces detailed accounts through close readings of social processes, while 'quantitative' research renders more limited, but controllable and generalisable, information about causal relations and regularities of the social and cultural fabric.



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Methodological Bricolage

I think that the best strategy is methodological pragmatism, focusing on the problem to be researched, and on what type of knowledge is sought. Instead of methodological positioning within the existing field of methods literature, one can instead, as methodologists Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2000) have suggested, conceive one's research strategy as a form of bricolage.

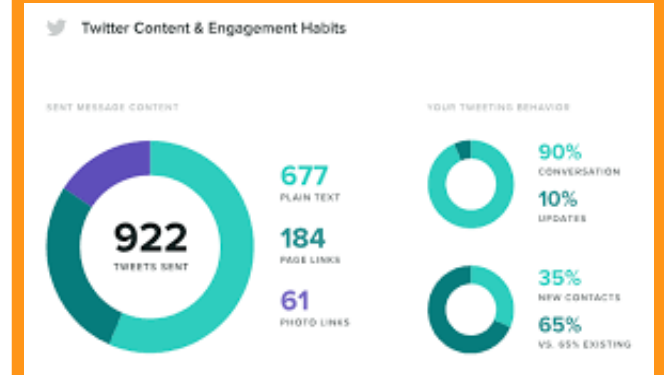


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What is social media data?

Every social media platform relies on inputs from its to serve them appropriately. Some of the data includes metrics like the number of likes, increase in followers, number of shares, engagement duration, and more. Social media data is any information collected from social media platforms that provides insights into the activities of users on the platform.

The collection of personal data is a sensitive subject among online communities and the legislative community as a whole. This is because, while it is okay to collect data concerning the activities of users on various social networks and is considered somewhat ethical, the collection of personal data is not.

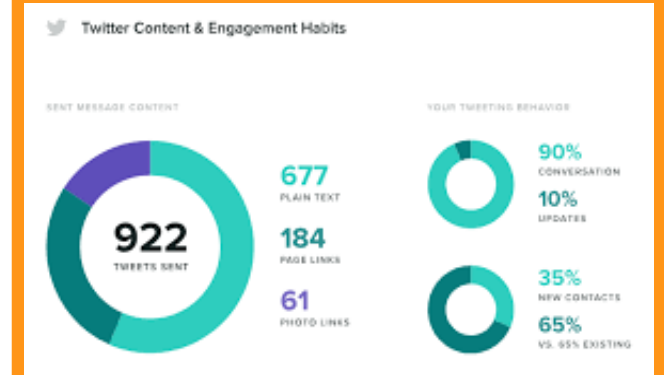


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What is social media data?

Companies can influence more than just the buying habits of their customers with their personal data. They can influence something as important as their election choices. A good example is the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Social media data collection is not as simple as it sounds, for many reasons. The type of data collected depends on the platform and the relevance of the data to an organization.



For instance, the data obtained on Facebook will include the number of likes, number of shares, and follower increases. Twitter's data would include the number of impressions, retweets, and likes. For Instagram, data like hashtag usage, engagement rates, and active followers are important.



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Why should you collect social media data?

So, you might wonder, "even if you have all of this social data from various social media platforms, what use does it offer?"

Having access to raw data provides you with the opportunity to understand your customers better, and develop an effective content strategy. When you obtain data, you can know the interests of your audience and tailor the content you create for real people.

Here are five marketing goals that social media data collection can be used for:



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Why should you collect social media data?

Content optimization

According to the Content Marketing Institute, 57% of marketing executives admit that on-page content development is the most effective SEO tactic. Every organization at this point knows that SEO is a huge part of customer reach in the online marketing world.

Optimizing content has been tested and proven to be the best way of achieving high levels of engagement with existing audiences and potential customers. Thanks to the technology available today, you can easily optimize your content for brands and customers.



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Why should you collect social media data?

Content optimization

Social media data collection ensures that you have enough data to satisfy the needs of your audience based on their preferences. By collecting data, it becomes easier to know which of the social media platforms are most popular among your audience.

Social media data collection also ensures that you know exactly what type of content appeals to your audience, what time of the day you should post, and how to achieve maximum reach. To simplify such tasks, you can use the Social media content analytics tool Popsters.



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Why should you collect social media data?

Social media strategy development

The best part of social media strategy development is that it essentially insures your company for future developments. By having a media strategy in place, you can be sure that your business has a contingency plan in place for sudden changes in social platforms.

By collecting social media data, you can identify what your customers share and post about. This means you can easily solve their problems because you already know what they are. Twitter is a very important platform for businesses that need to know what their customers think of their business.



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Why should you collect social media data?

Better SEO strategies

SEO makes up a huge part of the full picture when it comes to social media marketing. While it is easy to think that simply producing more content would equal better engagement, it is not always true.

Social media data ensures that you can formulate the right strategies required to retain your customers and appeal to potential customers. This way, you can create the essential content for any particular context as gathered data gives you access to customer needs.



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Why should you collect social media data?

Better SEO strategies

Some of the important terms on most social networks are keywords, hashtags, and engagement.

In terms of search, social media platforms are used along with search engines like Google and Bing.

In 2012, it was estimated that Facebook alone handled over one billion search queries in a day. In contrast, Twitter handled over 19 billion searches in a single month in 2010.



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Why should you collect social media data?

Brand image management

Social networks are very useful for finding out what your customers are saying about your brand. With data collection on various social media channels, you can tell what people are saying about your brand, either positive or negative.

This ensures that you can find effective ways of keeping your customers satisfied and catering to the complaints that they have. Some brands have gone on to find new customers with the use of Facebook messages to collect information about how to best connect with them and identify their needs.



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Social media analytics: why is it so important?

Twitter is a platform that relies heavily on the analytics of social media data to cater to its users. Of course, Twitter is not the only platform using data analysis to better serve its users. Other platforms, like Facebook and Instagram, also use it to pick the content that they recommend to their users.

It would be almost impossible for this to be done manually or based on intuition. This is where data analytics tools come in because there is no such thing as "guessing" in the analytics conversation.



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Social media analytics: why is it so important?

Social data is a form of big data and is obtained from a company's profile across every social media site that the organization is on, including YouTube, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

Social media analysis is an important part of the data collection process, and the quality of the data analysis determines how many positive results can be expected.



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Analyzing social media data - tools and methods

There are several tools available for marketing companies and organizations that need to analyze social data for their clients. Choosing the appropriate tool for social data analysis is critical not only for obtaining the most accurate results but also for ease of presentation. It is important to use tools that make it easy to interpret the results of social data analysis regardless of the social platform on which social media data collection is conducted.



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Analyzing social media data - tools and methods

Most social media sites, like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, all have their own analytic tools. However, since most companies use multiple social networks and each platform measures their data using different metrics, there is a need for tools that can be used to analyze data on every social media platform.

While you can use free tools like Google analytics, we would suggest using a more dedicated tool. Choosing a great tool for data analysis is the best way to ensure your company's social presence in the future.

The best way to understand how people consume and engage with any content that your brand produces is with the use of the right software.



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Picking the best social media analytics tool

Here are some of the factors to pay attention to when choosing the best social media analytics tool for your company:

Comprehensive data collection

Optimal customization

A user-friendly result presentation system

The ease of profile swapping and grouping

Link authentication for security

Competition benchmarking

Active comparison features for paid and organic traffic

Good customer support



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Picking the best social media analytics tool

Common analysis metrics to consider

1. Ad Analysis
2. Demographic Analysis
3. Content Optimization
4. Audience Analysis
5. Engagement analysis



Thank You