

Why Social Media Research isn't Social Media Monitoring

Most people are at least somewhat familiar with **social media monitoring**. But at the same time, the concept of social media research is still foreign. Social media monitoring serves a basic purpose which includes allowing you to identify:

- How many times a search term is found
- When the search term is found
- Where the search term is found
- Who is mentioning the search term

However, **social media research** is in fact research, just like survey research, focus group research, or observational research. In a sense, social media research is survey research without the survey. An outline of questions is identified, sampling sources are identified, measurement strategies are prepared, and then the data collection and analyses take place. Many strict processes are in place which ensure that valid and reliable results are obtained so that business decisions can be properly informed.

Social media research includes some concepts similar to monitoring but also many additional ones:

- **Sample size** indicates how many times a brand is found and allows the evaluation of confidence intervals
- Strict back-end **data quality and validity processes** ensure consistent high standards of measurement
- **Sampling** provides consistency in measurement and allows clients to focus search efforts
- **Validated sentiment analysis** generates agreement or satisfaction scores for every opinion
- **Measurement strategies** provide results that match the Likert scale scoring mechanisms of survey research
- **Trending** illustrates changes in volume of chatter or sentiment over time
- **Content analysis** permits precise identification of where strengths and weaknesses lie according to traditional marketing research measures and category specific measures
- **Norms** allow clients to compare sentiment of their brand with other brands in the same subcategory, category, or industry



Social media research is far more than counting. With processes thoroughly grounded in traditional marketing research methods, results have a superior level of validity and reliability.