



SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING 101

HOW TO SELECT A SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING TOOL PROVIDER

SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING RESOURCES FOR OCEAN COMMUNICATORS

HOW TO SELECT A SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING TOOL

This guide is part of a library of resources created for the Advancing Strategic Ocean Communication Project, led by Communications Inc. in partnership with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK Branch, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and UNESCO Ocean, to support ocean communicators with social media listening.

This guide covers how to select a social media listening tool from the existing landscape of social media intelligence providers:

- What are social media listening tools?
- What to consider before selecting a provider
- How to approach the choice
- Questions to ask during a demo or trial
- AI capabilities
- Key providers on the market
- Notes on budget
- Additional resources

SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING TOOLS

The following two definitions help understand the role of social media listening tools in advancing communication strategy.



SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING

Using social media data to analyse how online users discuss certain topics and themes.

While general knowledge of social media platforms and research methods are already part of the professional expertise of communication teams, the changing accessibility of social media data and specific knowledge of social media queries are often a barrier to finding useful insights from social media content.

Social media listening technology tools offer access to this wide pool of data in a comprehensive and user-friendly way allowing communicators to expand their understanding of users' perceptions of an organisation/topics/event.



SOCIAL MEDIA INTELLIGENCE

The landscape of research methods and technology tools used in the social media listening landscape.

WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE SELECTING A PROVIDER

LISTENING NEEDS

Start by considering your social media listening needs to present providers with a picture of how you intend to use the tool:

- Are you interested in monitoring content about your organisation and events? Will you be researching broad topics and filtering content by specific languages/countries/types of content? Are you interested in certain platforms more than others?

BUDGET

Consider the available budget you can set aside for a listening tool, starting from around GBP 10,000/12,000 per year.

SOCIAL MEDIA DATA COVERAGE

Prepare a list of platforms that you need to monitor. Some tools are limited to searching on certain platforms or only offer additional platforms at extra costs.

- What timeframe is important for you to research? Will you only be researching content posted in the future, or are you interested in historical posts about certain topics? Most providers will charge an additional fee to access historical posts from the past 1/2/5 years.

VISUALISATION

Is data visualisation important for you? Each provider has a slightly different look and feel in the way data is presented.

HOW TO APPROACH THE CHOICE

REQUEST A DEMO TO VARIOUS PROVIDERS

To get started on your selection process, request a demo of the listening tools to get a full understanding of their capabilities and functionalities.

You will often be asked to provide an example of what you are interested in researching for them to create a bespoke example. This could be as simple as the name of your organisation or a more complex ocean topic you are interested in.

PREPARE QUESTIONS

Prepare questions covering the various aspects as suggested on the following page.

ASK FOR A TRIAL

If not immediately offered, ask to trial the tool for a week or a month so that you can familiarise yourself with the functionalities and test it with your team.

ENGAGE WITH THE TEAM DURING THE TRIAL

The numerous filters and functionalities can feel overwhelming at first. During the trial, don't be afraid to send questions to the customer support team asking for their help to set up more advanced queries and create various visualisations of the results to get the most out of the tool.

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A DEMO OR TRIAL

Useful questions to ask when assessing a social media listening tool provider:

- Which social media platforms do you cover? What is the timeframe covered for each platform?
- Is there a limit on how many search queries can be run at the same time?
- Is there a limit on social media posts that can be researched per month/year?
- Are historical media posts available in the results? If yes, how far back? Are additional historical results available at extra costs?
- Are social media mentions sampled before being shown, or will I have access to the full results? (Some tools only show a sample of all existing posts from a search query, while this can be acceptable for a broad topic, it can show an incomplete and biased picture from smaller topics)
- What support does the team offer? Would they be able to assist with building search queries?
- Are there extra functionalities that can be cut to reduce costs?

AI CAPABILITIES

Most social media listening tools already include AI-powered functionalities you can assess. These include:

AI-powered query builder - a tool that creates complex search queries for you from simple lists of keywords and text prompts.

AI summaries - Once the social media posts are retrieved for your searches, this AI functionality offers an automated summary of all posts, describing what users discussed in those posts. This can be extremely helpful with broad research topics that have thousands of social media posts.

AI sentiment analysis - While this still needs improvements, AI-powered sentiment analysis inside listening tools offers a good assessment of the sentiment around a certain topic/event/hashtags/organisation. Watch out for misunderstandings around humour, social media slang and foreign language translations. E.g., "I'm dead!" used by a user online usually means they are enjoying the content and finding it funny. However, automated analysis often categorises it as something negative because of the word "dead".

KEY PROVIDERS ON THE MARKET

Provider	Notes
 Brandwatch	https://www.brandwatch.com/ It used to be one of the leading providers, but its visualisation is now less advanced and all mentions are sampled.
 CISION®	https://www.cision.com/lp/cisionone/ CisionOne is Cision's social media listening tool. The company specialises in media outreach and PR/Journalists outreach.
 Meltwater	https://www.meltwater.com/ One of the most advanced tools on the market for data coverage and visualisation.
 sprinklr	https://www.sprinklr.com/ Focused on crisis communications and monitoring for brands. Wide customer base worldwide.

KEY PROVIDERS ON THE MARKET

Provider	Notes
	https://www.talkwalker.com/ One of the most advanced tools on the market for data coverage and visualisation
	https://youscan.io/ Advanced tool with excellent results and visualisations. Requires various add-ons to the basic price to get better coverage.

These providers focus on overall listening of social media platforms and gather posts from across key platforms.

There are numerous other providers that specialise in one specific aspect of social media landscape, such as audience analysis, monitoring of videos, emerging trends identification, influencer identification. While these tools do not include full content from social media, they might be appropriate depending on the organisation's research needs.

[The Social Intelligence Lab's Tools Directory](#) includes an overview of providers of different specialisations.

NOTES ON BUDGET

Some considerations to review when assessing a provider's pricing proposal:

- **Watch out for add-ons** - More advanced functionalities might be offered for additional cost. Review whether these are necessary or ask if they can be taken out to reduce costs. For instance, storage of researched social media posts might be offered for one or two years, but this might not interest you if, once your research about a topic is done, you won't need to come back to this topic.
- **Historical data** - Searching for historical posts will almost likely require extra cost on top of the basic price. Depending on your needs, 1 year of content might be more than enough for your research. Keeping in mind that, other than X, most platforms won't be able to offer historical data older than 3 months.
- **Volumes of mentions** - Check what the limits of social media posts are for research on a monthly/yearly basis, to make sure they cover your needs.
- **Discounts for advanced payments** - Ask if any discount is offered for advanced payment at the beginning of the month, or if an option for you, a discount for the full yearly payment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

OCEAN INSIGHT STRATEGY UNIT



Browse the available resources on social media listening from the community.



Ocean Insight and Strategy Unit Powered by Communications INC

Unlocking the power of intel and evidence: providing research, analysis and strategic thinking to drive forward ocean-climate action.

 Communications INC

SOCIAL MEDIA INTELLIGENCE LAB TECH DEMO DAY



An online event in which multiple providers run demos of their tools for listening professionals.



Social Listening Tech Demo Day | Virtual Event | 11-12 June 2024

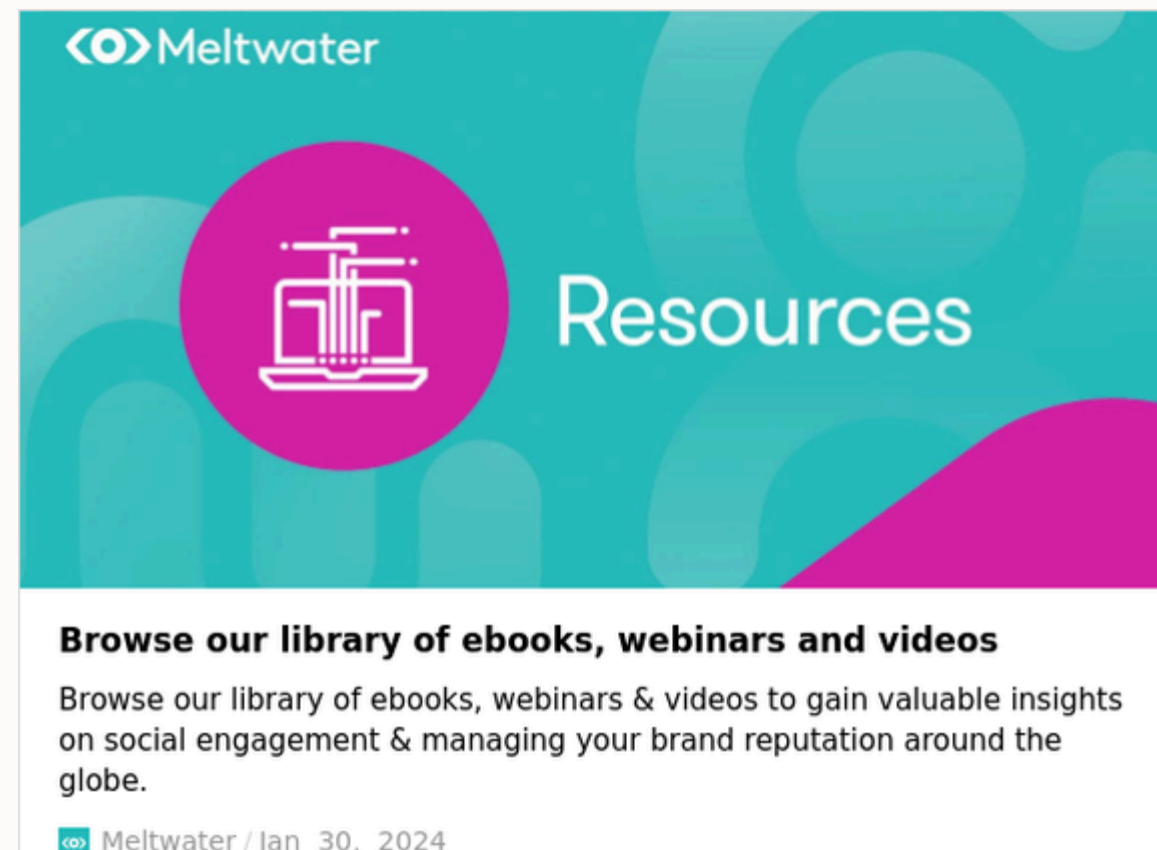
A technology showcase for social listening tools and tech. Free of shiny pitches, marketing fluff, and hard push on sales but packed full of experts with tips to take your social listening to the next level.

 thesilab.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A SELECTION OF PROVIDERS' FREE RESOURCES

 Meltwater



 **Talkwalker**
by Hootsuite®

Social Media Monitoring for free! 2 tools to make your job easier!

2 free social media monitoring & listening tools to make your life as a marketer easier!

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