Social Media & Consumer Voice

Dr. Dani Madrid-Morales
University of Houston
Social media as data

• Unobtrusive observation of social media users’ behaviors, attitudes, and opinions.
  • Large volumes of metadata [e.g. excellent for time series analysis]
  • Rich datasets [text, images, reactions]

• Easy and quick access to large volumes of data.
  • Through platforms’ APIs [more restricted access, usually free]
  • Through third-party companies [less restricted access, usually expensive]

• Limited privacy, reproducibility, and thoroughness can be important limitations.
Uses of social media data

• Raw/unprocessed social media data for explanatory research.
  • User reactions, geolocation, demographic information (when available) and others can be easily mined, and used to understand differences between/within groups;

• Social media data for exploratory/descriptive research.
  • “Traditional” behavioral and social science has used focus groups, interviews, surveys, and other methods to describe/explore populations/phenomena.
  • Computational techniques can be used to recode and transform unprocessed social media data, and use this to better design explanatory research.
Common Approaches

• Sentiment analysis (Liu, 2015; Zhang & Liu, 2017)
  • Uses off-the-shelf or custom dictionaries (i.e. list of words) to determine the valence of texts;

• Topic modeling (Blei, Ng & Jordan, 2003; Roberts et al. 2014)
  • Either through supervised or unsupervised machine learning algorithms we can classify documents (texts and images) into a $k$ number of topics;

• Network analysis (Bail, 2016)
  • By examining interactions between users we can computationally identify cluster of users, organizations, opinions...
IPA Consumer Protection: Social Media Listening

• As financial services digitize, more consumers are bringing their experiences online as well. Often bypassing “official” channels.

• This project will collect & analyze consumer protection-relevant content on SNS (12 months) to explore their relevance as data sources.
  • Builds on “Did you see my tweet? Monitoring financial consumer protection via social media” (Mazer & Onchieku, 2019)

• The pilot will consist of a social media listening tool tested in digital financial services in Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda.

• Findings will inform further experimentation with consumer engagement/complaints handling via SNS by regulators & civil society.


