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Measuring and Evaluating Media: Traditional and Social

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Introduction

Media remain essential to public sector communication. To track and improve performance, communication through and with media must be evaluated. However, today the media environment raises both challenges and opportunities for media evaluation. This is due to the increased number and types of "new media" that are challenging press, radio, and television (TV) and creating a modern mediascape characterized by disintermediation and fragmentation.

Despite the recognized importance of media in public sector communication, the evaluation of both traditional and social media has relied in the past on a few primary quantitative metrics. However, digital media now enables the collection of a wide range of metrics, such as the number of views, downloads, clickthroughs, likes, follows, and shares. But with the proliferation of many different metrics, identifying standards for media evaluation is ever more challenging.

In undertaking evaluation of media relations and publicity practices, there are two interrelated but nevertheless different activities to examine:

1 Media relations, the relationship with journalists and major social media influencers, such as bloggers; and
2 Media publicity, the extent to which media content positively supports the objectives of an organization.

The advent of digital communication has revolutionized the way organizations interact with news media and the way the media system is organized and works (Alfonso & de Valbuena Miguel, 2006). The media system is increasingly characterized by a greater fragmentation of audiences and by the emergence of new professions such as data-driven journalists and social influencers (Gillin, 2008; Parasie & Dagiral, 2013; Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). Thus, the focus of media relations and publicity practices is shifting to social media (Waters, Tindall, & Morton, 2010).

The Handbook of Public Sector Communication, First Edition. Edited by Vilma Luoma-aho and María-José Canel.

Within this new digital communication environment, public communication practitioners are increasingly being required to be skilled in planning relational strategies with online news media and in foreseeing and evaluating the success of digital communication strategies. Understanding the impact of social media relations is necessary for legitimizing investments in online communication and for justifying strategic choices made within the new environment. But, while there is a need to develop shared and standardized evaluation practices, the proliferation of new channels, tools, and metrics introduces new challenges. The purposes of this chapter are to provide a systematic overview of the extant metrics and measurement techniques for evaluating traditional and social media relations practices and to offer a view for the future. The chapter is structured as follows. First, we begin by briefly depicting the nowadays media scenario to address the complexity of evaluation and measurement processes. Then, we describe media relations' metrics. Next, we explore methods and metrics for evaluating and measuring publicity. Finally, we turn to a discussion on the impact of media relations and publicity on organizational performance.

Media Landscape at a Glance

The traditional media landscape has undergone dramatic changes over the past decade. As new communication channels increase and gain audiences, newspaper print runs have reduced, and TV audiences are impacted by the competition provided by digital media and web platforms. In an effort to maintain their business, the established monopolies and oligopolies of traditional media and the "old economy" are banding together, as seen with the announced merger between Time Warner and AT&T. Others traditional media are being purchased by a relatively new player, as seen in the sale of *The Washington Post* to Amazon.

This is the era of convergence-divergence, as defined by Ash (2016), where the media and audience regularly exchange their roles in a multi-device stream of stimuli and reactions. In a world where mobile internet users exceed half of the total internet users (Chaffey, 2018), newspapers such as *The Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times* have developed online applications to deliver real-time coverage of news, and other media such as *The Washington Post* deliver instant articles on Facebook. We are also living in an era of fake news (Balmas, 2014; Borden & Tew, 2007) and post-truth (Bailey, 2018; Harsin, 2015), which news sources, media producers, and consumers have to negotiate.

In 2016, American TV audiences were down by 11% compared with six years earlier, and in the 12–24 age group, the decrease was 40% (*The Economist*, 2016). As with print media, TV networks began creating multimedia platforms to compete with news circulated via the web. So, as a result of the vast changes to media content and distribution, traditional media relations and publicity practices are no longer suited. Over the last decade, an impactful phenomenon called deliberate disintermediation (i.e., when stakeholders benefit from direct access to information, goods, or services without traditional intermediaries such as news media, publishing companies, or other subjects) has developed.

The phenomenon of disintermediation "describes the much more prevalent negotiated reduction of the number and the value of links dominated by a central institution and the simultaneous strengthening of links between the members of a community" (Gregory & Halff, 2017, p. 7). Gregory and Halff (2017) suggest that the role of third parties that operate as intermediaries between producers and consumers of information become less important, since organization's relationships with the public are changing by being direct, interactive, and real-time. This has resulted in transforming information searching modalities that significantly support consumer decision-making processes (Raaij, 1998).

These changes undermine the traditional intermediary role of journalists and news media. In the past, journalists defined facts, framed information, quoted official sources in order to create news, and shared content to the vast audience (Hermida, 2010). Nowadays, the social media environment has stimulated the increasing fragmentation of news and the proliferation of official and not official sources of information. This has resulted in the rise of new types of information professionals such as ambient journalists[1] (Hermida, 2012), participatory or citizen journalists (Glaser, 2009),[2] and grassroots journalists (Aitamurto, 2011).[3] Within this framework, the previously ambiguous "love-hate" relationship between journalism and public relations (Harcup, 2009, p. 72) needs to be re-addressed.

As the media landscape has undergone such a revolution, assessing the effectiveness of media relations strategies is complex. But digital media have an important role to play. They can now make available a variety of metrics to governments and public sector companies by providing opportunities to get data in real-time and to understand the impact of media relations and publicity.

To implement a successful media measurement and evaluation plan, the first step is to identify the type of media used by public communication practitioners. In this regard, this chapter proposes dividing media channels into three categories: traditional media (i.e., newspapers, magazines, TV); online media (both online versions of traditional media and media online, i.e., online newspapers); and social media.

The major focus of media and communication practitioners has been on the level of quantitative and qualitative visibility that organizations receive in the media, in the form of publicity. *Publicity* is a general term that refers to media content that is produced with input or influence from the organization or independently reporting on the organization. Publicity includes content in traditional, online, and social media, and it differs from media relations, which refer to the interactions among PR practitioners and journalists and editors. This involves a great deal of work done behind the scenes, which could positively affect the quality of relationships between organizations and media's staff.

In the next section, the analysis will look at how media relations are evaluated, and the challenges posed by new media (online and social).

Evaluating Media Relations

Media relations is a relationship-based practice. Credibility and respect are the main drivers of relationships between organizations and journalists (either people working within a traditional editorial team or social web influencers or online journalists). Credibility and respect are more and more challenged by the digital context, due to the existence of frequent false rumors, misinformation, and fake news.

Practitioners use a wide range of tools and techniques to cultivate relationships with journalists and editors. These include press releases, press conferences, interviews, online newsrooms, phone calls, e-mails, briefings, and provision of background material. Most of the media relations work is behind the scenes. The quality of a media relations process is measured through the quality of relationships developed between the organization's staff and journalists and editors. The quality of a relationship could be assessed through audits performed on a regular basis. Organizations should entrust audits to independent agencies in order to disclose eventual weaknesses in the

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[1] Ambient journalism can be defined as "Social awareness streams … where the journalism itself becomes fragmented and omnipresent, with contributions from both journalists and non-journalists" (Hermida, 2012, p. 660).

[2] Citizens journalists are "people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others" (Glaser, 2009, p. 622).

[3] Grassroots journalism is "the grassroots bottom-up distribution in which journalism is created and influenced by the public, the readers, or the users" (Aitamurto, 2011, p. 431).

relationships with journalists. This aim is attainable by applying evaluation models that identify relationships with stakeholders as units of measurement and break down relationships into variegate components to assess their overall efficacy. As examples of essential components of a relationship, Hon and Grunig (1999) refer to trust, commitment, and satisfaction.

As for trust, this refers to the organization's level of willingness to open up to the journalists and editors, by guaranteeing the establishment of a transparent and authentic flow of information. Trust is a complex concept, which has to be further divided into three subcomponents in order to be measured: integrity, dependability, and competence. Integrity is the perception among journalists that an organization is honest, and it fairly conducts its business. Dependability refers to the journalists' conviction that the organization will keep its promises. Finally, competence refers to media's conviction that the organization has the ability to carry out its promises. Therefore, the relationship between the organization and stakeholders is based on trust if the media think that the former will keep its promises and that it possesses the necessary skills to do so.

Commitment refers to the parties' willingness to maintain stable relationships over time. Both parties consider this dimension as the amount of the resources invested to maintain the relationship and to make it last over time. Finally, satisfaction rests on the difference between resources allocated, costs borne, and benefits obtained for each party involved in the relationship.

Satisfaction is related to the quality of information received by the parties, in terms of in-depth analysis, truthfulness of news, promptness by press offices in providing answers to the different requests.

Organizations should also focus on and constantly monitor the quality of relationships with the press contacts that are assigned to cover the company, its products or its industry. A crucial activity for organizations is, for instance, to take into account those journalists who write for the company targeted media list or those who write about topics of interest for the organization or, finally, those who are the most influential journalists within the organization's industry.

Within the digital environment, in order to measure the quality of online relationships, organizations need to integrate the analysis of offline components previously explained such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction with online-based components related to the following main two elements (Gilpin, 2010): the transactional content, what is exchanged by organizations and online journalists or bloggers that can help companies in measuring the quality of developed relationships; the nature of ties and connections between the parties, in terms of strength, mutuality, roles, and expectation within the relationship.

If we adopt a logic model perspective to identify the sequential chain of measures that can be applied to evaluate media, we can include inputs that can be transformed into activities and in turn generate outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Inputs are working hours and resources invested by companies' staff to build and cultivate relationships with journalists and editors, to understand the different media targets and which kind of information they need to be fed with. Activities are part of the media relations process and include preparing media releases, organizing press tours and conferences, and whatever else could be useful for the attainment of the predefined goals.

Outputs are the most frequently evaluated results of the work done by media offices. When we cite outputs, we refer to the publicity or visibility generated into media. These are the first results of a media process and are often considered superficial. The most important results are the effects generated by publicity on the publics (the outcomes) and the final influences of publicity on the organization (the impacts). The next section of this chapter provides a more detailed analysis of the metrics evaluating publicity.

Evaluating Traditional Media Publicity

The main result of media relations is the amount of exposure or attention that the organization received in the media, called publicity. For many years, publicity was simply assessed by summing up the number of times an organization as well as its products, services, brands, or spokespersons were cited in the media. Over time, measures of publicity have become more and more sophisticated. They focused on the quality of contents, on the appropriateness of media on which contents were published and on the features of persons who were exposed to the published contents. Practitioners use the following variables to determine the salience and likely impact of the contents:

- *Prominence of contents.* It is related to the visibility degree attributed to the citations of the organization, its products, and services in the articles. If the name of the organization is mentioned in the title or at the beginning of an article, or during the announcement of a TV service, the prominence is evaluated as higher. If the citation is less visible as is included in the body of the text, without any specific highlight, the prominence and consequently the quality of exposed contents will be assessed lower.
- *Positioning of articles.* It is related to the position of the article citing the organization within the media. If it appears on the front page of a conventional media outlet, or in a special section (i.e., automotive or finance), contents result as more prominent and the quality of exposure is consequently evaluated as higher. The position and prominence of contents dedicated to organization are important with regard to whether the messages appear in clearly visible positions, such as the top right-hand side of the page of a newspaper, or the most upper part of an online newspaper—where average users spends 81% of their time (Fessenden, 2018).
- *Source of the content.* The source refers to the roots of exposure and visibility. More specifically, it is assessed whether the exposure has been generated by the activities done by the organization's staff, through for instance a press conference or up-to-date information conveyed to news media. The source of exposure is an indicator that the media relations process was effective, and it can positively impact the quality of relationships with the journalists.
- *Size or length of exposure.* Exposure is related to the physical space occupied by publicity, in terms of centimeters occupied by items mentioning the organization in the media as well as the number of minutes dedicated to the company in a TV service. To this regard, it could be quite surprising to see how the quantity of articles published in the media is the predominant criteria for evaluating the exposure, rather than the quality of its contents.
- *Share of voice.* It is related to the exposure and coverage the organization obtains within the media compared to the total exposure media are getting to all organizations belonging to the same industry. In other words, share of voice makes organizations able to compare their coverage to that of their competitors.
- *Visual content.* The visual component bears relevance, because message effectiveness might depend on the use of images, tables, charts, black and white, or colored text. If the image is highly related to the organization, the quality of the article is evaluated as higher.

Other variables affecting the salience of contents are more related to the characteristics of media on which contents have been published. For instance, the significance of the media according to the target audience as well as the media diffusion (i.e., newspaper circulation data or program ratings) could influence the quality of publicity. Reach and opportunities to see (OTS) (or impressions) are even crucial metrics to be considered (Galpin & Gullen, 2000; McDonald, 1997; Broadbent, Spittler, & Lynch, 1997). Reach estimates "the size of an audience exposed to a communication based on some audited system (traditional media)" (Stacks & Bowen, 2013, p. 26). OTS or impressions refer to the number of times a specific message disseminated by the organization could reached the target audience (Stacks & Bowen, 2013, p. 26). This index is calculated by multiplying the rate of media diffusion by the number of times the message appears. If, for instance, in a certain period of time, a daily newspaper published four articles containing a given message from the company, OTS will be calculated by multiplying the number of newspaper readers by the number of published articles. If the message is also disseminated by other media, circulation data concerning different media will be added up, as will the number of times the company has been referred to in the media (articles, TV programs, and so forth). However, this index might not be relevant when showing the number of people who are likely to be reached by the message without considering the frequency they have been exposed to the message. The OTS index equal to 30 million people might either mean that each of them has read the message once or that 10 million people have been exposed to the message three times. For this reason, this index usually refers to people who have been exposed to the message once, in order to clearly indicate the frequency and the number of receivers of a given message. Further, the OTS is significant if the media used and the target public to whom the message has been sent were appropriate. Actually, impressions ought not to be confused with outcomes, as the latter only exists in people's mind and could be a consequence of impressions.

Results concerning the quality of published contents could be customized for the organization, as they could be related to its reputational pillar and help measuring its media reputation. Media reputation can be defined as the total number of contents reported by media concerning the following organizational dimensions: the quality of its products and services, its organizational leadership, its governance and management, workplace satisfaction, corporate social responsibility, emotional appeal, innovative attitude, and performance (Deephouse, 2000). Media reputation is an indicator of how media perceive an organization and the quality of contents that discusses the organization's behaviors.

The Methodology of Media Content Analysis

As we have discussed in the previous section, the evaluation of media publicity could be focused on variables that determine the salience of contents such as prominence, positioning, and so on. Those mentioned are just part of the variables that can be examined in a media content analysis. What is really important for an organization is to analyze the nature of topics that media relate to organization and the accuracy of messages included in media outlets. If an organization diffuses a media release, then it should evaluate if messages that have been communicated are accurately mentioned or if they are neglected by the media. If media don't regularly pay proper attention to messages spread by an organization, it would mean, for instance, that messages are not prominent enough in press releases or that the organization's staff did not take adequate care of newsworthiness of messages themselves.

Also, the tone (positive, neutral, and negative) of the published contents influences the quality of media publicity. The tone measures the way the media regards the organization, its people, its product, or the spread messages. Media content analysis is a systematic and objective methodology recommended to evaluate the contents and the tone of media publicity. It is a “specialised sub-set of content analysis, a well-established research method that has been used since the mid-eighteenth century” (Macnamara, 2005, p. 191).

Content analysis is widely used in communication research because it allows researchers to focus in the meantime both on the contents and contexts within which contents are applied, as well as to reflect upon communalities across contents reported by media (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2014). It has been a matter for discussion over many decades whether content analysis is a quantitative or qualitative method (Macnamara, 2005, 2018a). “In quantitative content analysis, a researcher uses objectives and systematic counting and recording procedures to produce a quantitative description of the symbolic content in a text” (Neuman, 2006, p. 323). Qualitative content analysis is able to capture the context within which contents become meaningful. While through quantitative content analysis researchers count manifest units of analysis, qualitative analysis focuses on latent messages and interpretation of potential meanings as well. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are more and more considered complementary, and researchers frequently advocate for a blended research approach. For media relations evaluation, the advantage of using a mixed approach such as content analysis is that it allows for a closer look and deeper understanding of the issues discussed by stakeholders by evaluating the content and focusing on the most important themes. At the same time a mixed method approach can provide meaningful insights into what matters most for stakeholders. The first step of both a qualitative and quantitative content analysis is identifying units of analysis (i.e., words, phrases, and images) and then assigning them to categories through a process called *coding*, which can be human or automated. Coding categories can be derived directly and inductively from the raw data (Mayring, 2000; Patton, 2002) to produce descriptions or typologies that reflect how the people view the social world. Biases due to cultural influences, human subjectivity among coders and implicit meanings attributed to words should be minimized by using precise coding guidelines. Details about the methodology for conducting media content analysis can be found in Macnamara (2018b).

Evaluating Online and Social Media

The new digital scenario puts a huge amount of metrics, methodologies, and tools at public communication practitioners' disposal for evaluating the efficiency of organizational inputs (channels and tools) used for implementing media relations activities and analyzing the main outputs and outcomes of online media relations in terms of digital publicity.

Measuring the Efficiency of Online Process

Public communication practitioners willing to explore organizational inputs need to evaluate the efficiency of media relations channels and tools and make comparisons amongst different media relations processes and initiatives. For example, an organization can calculate the cost per key message by comparing the cost of each single activity with the number of key messages reported in the media and related to each performed activity. The following are the most used efficiency measures within digital environment:

- *Cost per impression (CPI)*. The cost for each impression obtained is calculated as the overall cost of communication activities/number of impressions.
- *Cost per lead (CPL)*. The cost of each lead or potential new contact is calculated as the cost of communication activities/number of leads.
- *Cost per action (CPA)*. The cost of each action (comment or mention) is the cost of communication activities/number of actions.
- *Cost per engagement (CPE)*. The cost of each interaction (click, like, or share) is the cost of communication activities/number of interactions (click, like, or share).
- *Cost per click (CPC)*. The cost for each click on digital content is the cost of communication activities/number of clicks.
- *Cost per referral (CPR)*. The cost of each positive review is the cost of communication activities/number of positive reviews.

Efficiency measures vary according to the media channel used and according to industry. Efficiency measures have not yet been standardized; however, public communication practitioners have at their disposal a series of benchmarks, as shown in Table 25.1.

According to research carried out by Salesforce Marketing Cloud (2016) on the average CPMs (cost per thousand impressions) among different social media channels, based on the analysis of impressions and engagements by marketing cloud customers, LinkedIn sponsored status update has the highest average CPM. The lowest average CPM was attributed to Instagram.

Research in the different average CPLs by channel or industry is illustrated in Tables 25.2 and 25.3, which shows that the highest CPL is related to the display and CRM advertising ($71) channels, whereas the lowest is related to SEO-content marketing activity ($14).

Table 25.1 Average Cost per Impression by Channel.

Channel	Global average CPMs ($)
Instagram	4.44
Facebook	5.75
Twitter	6.93
Facebook mobile app	7.29
LinkedIn sponsored status update	29.37

Source: Salesforce Marketing Cloud https://www.marketingcharts.com/digital-68514 2016.

Table 25.2 Average Cost per Lead by Channel.

Channel	Cost per lead ($)
Display and CRM advertising	71
SEA (search engine advertising)	60
Referrals	54
Webinars	45
Social media advertising	43
Email marketing	39
Retargeting adv	33
Social media	27
SEO-content marketing	14

Table 25.3 Average Cost per Lead by Industry.

Channel	Cost per lead ($)
Finance	47
Technology	45
Health	37
Manufacturing	36
Travel and tourism	29
Retail/CPG (cost per gross rating point)	29
Education	27
Telecommunications	26
Media/marketing	24

Across industries finance ($47) and technology ($45) registered the higher CPL whereas telecommunication ($26) and media/marketing ($24) industries showed the lowest CPL (Table 25.3).

CPE (like and shares), CPC (number of clicks), CPA (comments or mentions), and CPR (positive review) are related to specific actions implemented by digital users. Google AdWords provides industry benchmarks for what concerns the average CPC and the average CPA as indicated in Figures 25.1 and 25.2.

These tables provide examples of benchmarking systems for professionals with the aim to enable them in understanding, comparing, and interpreting collected results. More specifically, Google AdWords examine two types of networks: the Google search network and the display network. The first one is related to a group of search-related websites and apps where a

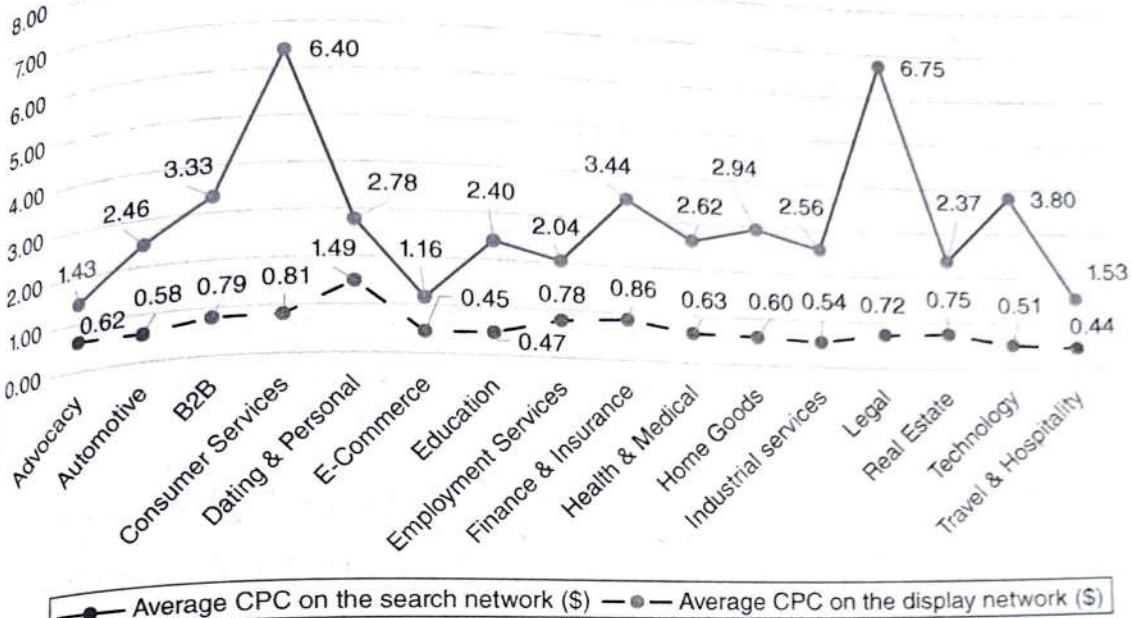

Figure 25.1 Benchmarking CPC by industry. Source: Adapted from Irvine, 2017.

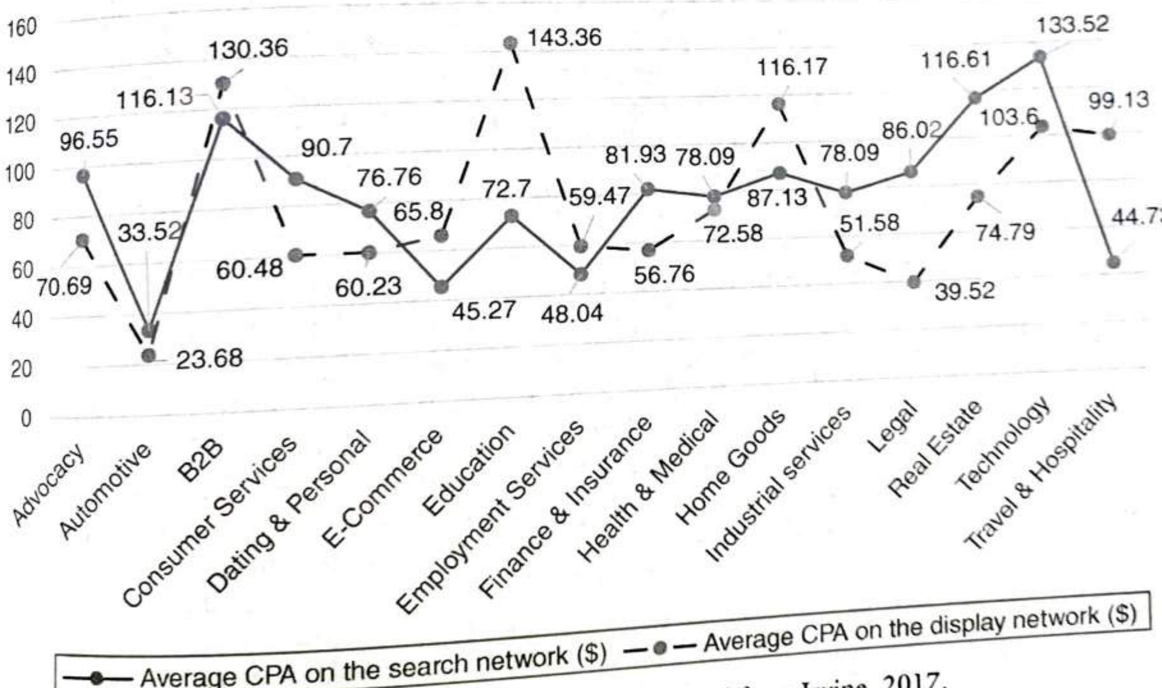

Figure 25.2 Benchmarking CPA by industry. Source: Adapted from Irvine, 2017.

communication campaign could appear. By using the Google search network, an advertisement can appear close to the search results when a user looks for specific terms related to the communication campaign (support.google.com, 2018). The display network includes a huge network of different websites across Internet and linked to Google that could be visited by potential users (support.google.com, 2018).

The average CPC in AdWords across all industries is $2.32 on the search network and $0.56 on the display network. On the search network the highest value is in legal industry ($5.88) whereas,

Table 25.4 Online Source of Information Measures.

	Online media	Social media
Author/media recognition	Name of the journalist(s) who write often about the organizations, product, service	Identity of online influencers
Relevance	Relevance of the media/influencer for your target audience	Relevance of the media/influencer for your target audience
Reach	Number of people who could potentially read, see, hear a content published by the media/influencer	Number of people who could potentially read, see, hear a content published by the media/influencer
Resonance	Number of times online content published by influencers is shared	Number of times online post or tweets are shared by other users

Source: Authors.

the lowest is in dating and personal ($0.19). On the display network, the highest value is in the employment service industry ($0.66) whereas the lowest is in dating and personal ($0.18).

The global average CPA in AdWords is $59.18 on the search network and $60.76 on the display network. On the search network the highest CPA observed is in the legal industry ($135.17), whereas the lowest is in dating and personal ($6.91). On the display network the highest CPA is in travel and hospitality ($129.69), whereas the lowest is in technology ($19.23).

Concerning the analysis of organizational inputs, public communications practitioners also need to analyze the source of information. For online publicity, this means analyzing and understanding the different types of influencers operating in the new digital mediascape.

Online influencers are characterized by specific features illustrated in Table 25.4: relevance, reach, and resonance. After having recognized and identified the author/media, public communication practitioners need to evaluate which is the relevance of the media/influencer for the target audience and for the organization (in terms of topics and contents matching); which is the dimensions of the media/influencer network (how many users follow them); and which is the resonance of the media/influencer, in terms of number of online contents, articles, posts, and tweets shared by media/influencers network's users.

According to the different level of relevance, reach and resonance, Traackr, a leading influencer management platform, has identified 10 profiles of influencers, and classifes them as the celebrity; authority; connector; personal brand; analyst, activist; expert; insider; disruptor; and journalist. Each type of influencer has diverse relational needs and so may require different modalities of engagement. For example, a celebrity influencer might like to develop and find new sponsors or develop partnerships with organizations, whereas authority influencers might prefer to be helped to create value for his or her community. Connectors could be supported by increasing and improving their networks, while personal brand influencers may need to build a strong reputation, and an analyst may simply prefer to gather data and specific knowledge. An activist influencer may appreciate being given access to organizational contexts and being given the opportunity to be involved in discussions directly with organization, whereas an expert can be called on for comment and to share his or her opinion about on a specific topic. Insider influencers may welcome being involved in fertile debates, but disruptors might prefer a more challenging or demanding debate with an organization. Finally, journalists desire to be provided with exclusive comments, information, and materials (http://www.traackr.com/faces-of-influence, 2015).

Calculating the value of an influencer for the organization is possible. Figure 25.3 allocates dollar figures to indicate the cost per post published by influencers (according to their audiences) on different channels.

Organizations can estimate the economic value of a specific social media account. For example, on Twitter, it is possible to influence by using specific programs such https://webfluential.

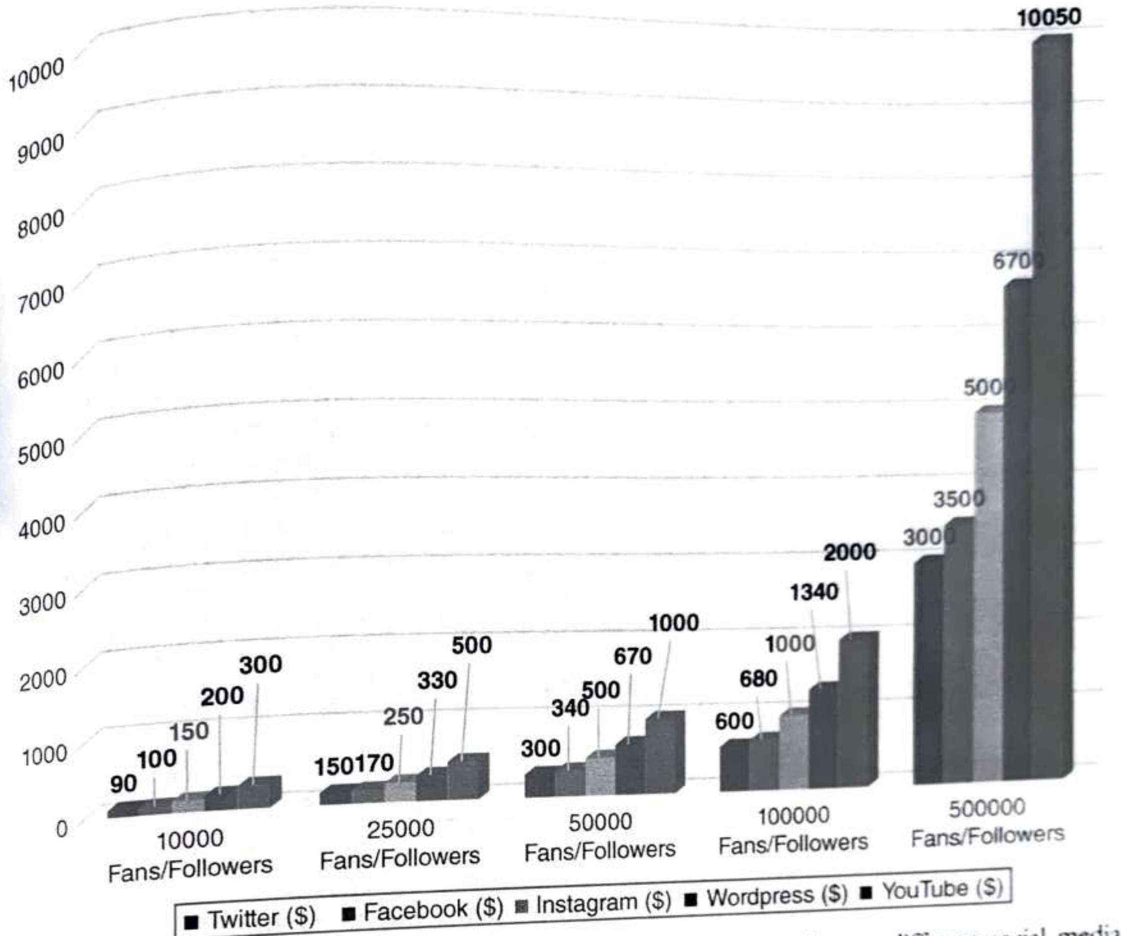

Figure 25.3 Online source media/influencer value (cost per post according to different social media channels). Source: Adapted from Geyser, 2017.

com/influence-estimator. These tools can help organizations enhance their online visibility by measuring the reach and the impressions of their media relations activities, that is, by estimating the number of people who had the opportunity to see a specific media relations campaign.

Measuring Online and Social Media Publicity

For what concerns the measurement and evaluation of online and social media publicity, public communication practitioners need to take into consideration quantitative and qualitative metrics related to the space occupied by the online content.

In this regard, pages viewed by users, search engine rankings generated from specific content, or keywords searches are often used as crucial metrics to evaluate the quality and the prominence of online content. Concerning social media, applications such as Sagekey Software and Social Mention can be used to monitor word of mouth and collect posts, comments, and shares. Textual objects such as digital posts, comments, and tweets can be analyzed to determine the percentage of positive messages and calculate the ratio as compared to negative messages. Furthermore, in the digital environment, sentiment analysis can be automated through data mining or textual analysis techniques that aim to identify messages by tone (Wilson, Wiebe, & Hoffmann, 2005). Applications such as Brandwatch, Radian 6, or Open Text can then be used to create a map of tones of the results for each topic. In addition to analyzing media articles,

Table 25.5 Quantity and Quality of the Space Occupied by the Content in the Media.

	Online media	Social media
Number of items mentioning the company	Number of online articles, video clips, etc.	Number of posts, comments, tweets, etc.
Number and prominence of mentions of organizations, products, brands, or spokespeople	Number of citations and highlighting (i.e., bold, italics, underlined, etc.)	Number of mentions and highlighting of mentions (i.e., bold, italics, underlined, etc.)
Topic	Main issues, subsidiary themes	Main issues, subsidiary themes
Key messages about the organizations	Number and accuracy of reported key messages	Number and accuracy of reported key messages
Prominence of content	Position of the content, section in which it appears, page views, search engine position	Likes and retweets by influencers, page views, search engine position
Tone of coverage	Sentiment analysis toward company, products, services, topics (positive, neutral, and negative)	Sentiment analysis (positive, neutral, and negative)
Coverage of competitors	Online share of voice	Social media share of voice
Size	Length, number of words	Length, number of words
Visual impact	Photographs, images related to the organization	Photographs, images related to the organization

Source: Authors.

public communication practitioners could identify the main messages shared in media relations activities and use sentiment analysis to examine digital audience attitudes in replies and follow-up posts to the media relations activities.

Table 25.5 summarize the main online and social media metrics for evaluating quantity and quality of the space occupied by the content in the online mediascape, which are similar to those related to the offline environment.

From a quantitative perspective, social media also provides different measures for evaluating the immediate reaction of the audience to a specific message received via social media. The metrics most widely used are:

- Clickthrough rate (CTR)
- % Referral traffic
- Coupon download (% increase or decrease rate)
- Information request (% increase or decrease rate)
- Really Simple Syndication (RSS) subscriber (% increase or decrease rate)
- Number of rating
- % Sharing rate per post
- % Retweet rate per post

These measures primarily focus on activation – that is, the extent to which an organization is capable of stimulating an action and encouraging digital users to ask for information about or acquire products and services. To achieve this, data and information can be collected such as CTR—defined as the number of clicks that digital content can receive per the number of impressions. The formula to calculate CTR is:

$$\text{Total clicks on ad}) / (\text{Total impressions}) = \text{Clickthrough rate.}$$

Box 25.1 Calculation of Average CTR

Two measures can be calculated for CTR, basic or average. While basic CTR measures the rate of clicks on each piece of content published by organizations, the average CTR is the total number of clicks divided by the total impressions across the digital communication campaign (Irvine, 2017). What is considered as a good average CTR can vary by industry. At a general level, over 2% may be considered an above-average CTR (Wordstream.com, 2017). However, public communication practitioners have identified Google AdWords Industry Benchmarks as a guide for average CTR across industries.

Table 25.6 shows the average CTR in AdWords across different industries on the search network or the display network. The industry with the highest average CTR on the search network is identified as ***dating & personal***, while the industry with the highest average CTR on the display network is ***technology***.

A complementary metric to the CTR is "referral traffic," which is a Google method for collecting information about the traffic source to websites or specific webpages. Referral traffic can be displayed as statistics based on the bounce rate, or the number of people who come to visit a website and then leave after a few seconds; the percentage of new visitors to a website or webpage; and the average time spent by users from a specific source.

Table 25.6 Benchmarking CTR in Different Industries.

Industry	Average clickthrough rate on the search network (%)	Average clickthrough rate on the display network (%)
Advocacy	1.72	0.52
Automotive	2.14	0.41
B2B	2.55	0.22
Consumer services	2.40	0.20
Dating & personal	3.40	0.52
E-commerce	1.66	0.45
Education	2.20	0.22
Employment services	2.13	0.14
Finance & insurance	2.65	0.33
Health & medical	1.79	0.31
Home goods	1.80	0.37
Industrial services	1.40	0.35
Legal	1.35	0.45
Real estate	2.03	0.24
Technology	2.38	0.84
Travel & hospitality	2.18	0.47

Source: http://www.wordstream.com/average-ctr, 2017.

However, it is also important to calculate the average CTR (see Box 25.1).

Activation can be measured not only as clickthroughs but also in terms of specific online behaviors such as coupon downloading, information requesting, or RSS subscription (RSS stands for "Really Simple Syndication" and it is a tool for distributing a list of headlines, update news, to a wide number of people who decide to subscribe for receiving automatic updates). Each behavior can be measured by counting the number of online coupons downloaded; the number of information requests via mail or chat; or number of RSS subscribers. For each metric, the percentage increase or decrease rate over a specified period of time should also be calculated. By triggering and stimulating specific behaviors, organizations can identify qualified leads and audiences who showed an interest in the organization. The ability to collect increasing number of qualified leads can therefore be useful for evaluating media relations and, especially for activities aimed at stimulating earned media.

Social media relations can also engage in advocacy by engaging in the following:

- Stimulate and encourage mentions and positive ratings.
- Prompt or post reviews of an organization, its products, and services.
- Foster relationships with potential brand ambassadors or encourage testimonials.

To assess if the aim of advocacy has been achieved, the following metrics can be collected: the number of positive scores collected by the means of social media (i.e., positive recommendations); the hashtag rate, based on the percentage of mentions using relevant hashtags; and the percentage of posts or tweets (retweets) shared online by digital users.

Outcomes and Impacts of Media Relations

Outcomes can be defined as the effects that publicity gained by means of the media relations process. They refer to the short-, medium-, and long-term changes induced in audiences. Desired outcomes should be included in the aims of media relations process.

Jin and Cameron (2007) define three types of outcomes: cognitive, affective, and conative.

Cognitive outcomes (also known as outtakes) are assessed in terms of whether the audience knows, understands, remembers, or immediately reacts to a message reported by a traditional or an online media. People's ability to understand the message depends on the accuracy and the richness of the meaning attributed to it. Cognitive outcomes can be evaluated by exploring two forms of remembering, that are recall and retention. Recall refers to the interlocutor's ability to remember the message and how it was conveyed by the organization, with or without stimulation. Retention is concerned with the ability to recollect the message in terms of its key contents. Evaluation is not only focused on recall and retention, but it also takes into account any immediate occurring reaction, such as, for instance, when a person receiving a message visits the organizational website after having read an article on the media.

Affective outcomes refer to the changes to interlocutors' opinions, interests, preferences, wishes, or attitudes induced by the means of communication activities. It is important to note that a major difference exists between opinion and attitude, which affects the research methods used to assess them. Opinions are easier to get because they are expressed verbally or in writing, whereas attitudes cannot be revealed by analyzing what people say, as they depend on knowledge, thinking (cognitive and mental predispositions), feelings, and motivation. Attitudes must be assessed by using indirect questions.

Behavioral outcomes show changes to interlocutors' routines attributed to the communication activities and, as such, they are considered both the most interesting and the most difficult effects to evaluate. These outcomes might be observed over long periods of time and make use of more sophisticated techniques than those used in the previous stages (e.g., experimental or quasi-experimental research, survey, direct, and indirect observation).

Identifying the outcomes of communication is not an easy process, as it might involve the implementation of highly advanced research methods of data processing. The more sophisticated the method adopted, the more accurate the results are likely to be. However, measuring outcomes is necessary for evaluating the impact of media relations on organizations and on its business indicators.

Evaluating the impact of a media relations process on the organizational performance requires communication practitioners to be familiar both with management terminology and organizational key performance indicators (KPIs) and key performance results (KRI).

Parmenter (2007) draws a distinction between KPIs and KRIs. KPIs are lead measures of organizational performance that are crucial to the company's current and future success. They are nonfinancial measures that are regularly monitored and associated with top responsibilities. While KPIs are core for performance and can be adjusted to increase the latter significantly, KRIs keep track of the organization's activities in relation to specific business areas. KRIs are influenced by different activities and cover a longer period of time than do KPIs. In performance measurement, the 10/80/10 rule needs to be applied, which means companies shall monitor 10 KPIs, 80 PIs (performance indicators), and 10 KRIs.

Internationally KRIs and KPIs can be classified according to six categories even linked to public sector performance: financial, citizens, internal processes, growth, community, and employees' perspectives.

The financial category is concerned with the organization's ability to appeal to the financial community and by generating positive economic results in the short, medium, and long run, such as in public enterprises. Economic and financial clusters could include an increase in earnings from selling goods and services for instance by state businesses, as well as efficiency in administrating organizational resources in core governmental agencies.

As regards citizens, their needs should be satisfied by offering high-quality products and services. Measures included in the citizens' cluster are, for instance, the level of people satisfaction, their loyalty, and acquisition.

In relation to internal processes, KPIs consist in identifying key processes to generate value, namely those that have the most significant impact on citizens' satisfaction and those that contribute to fulfilling the main company's economic goals. Specific quality standards are set down for each key process.

The growth category is concerned with the organization's potential to offer new services so as to generate new growth and learning processes. Key elements include staff skills and empowerment levels and systems to disseminate information.

The community cluster shows the support the organization receives at the local and national level, such as through long-term partnerships activated for promoting organizational support for environmental conservation.

Finally, the employees' category includes indicators that concern the improvement of employees' perception about their own organization and its ability to attract talents. These aspects are also important from the standpoint of workers in terms of their satisfaction, organization culture, and sense of belonging.

Calculating the organizational impact of media relations processes means finding the interrelations among resources invested into media relations (inputs), activities done (media relations), outputs (publicity), effects on target audiences (outcomes), and the KPIs. No golden formula exists for calculating the organizational impact. Numerous managerial methods and econometric models are available to calculate the impact of media relations on organizational performance. It is crucial to implement methods that are correct from a methodological point of view and to avoid simple methods that provide misleading results.

For example, for many years so-called advertising value equivalents (AVEs) has been widely used as indicator to calculate an economic value of publicity. AVE calculations involve multiplying the space or time occupied by editorial coverage by the cost of buying that coverage as advertising. The shortcomings of this metric have been discussed by many academics (Macnamara, 2005, 2018a; Watson, 1997) and professional associations in the field, including the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC).

AVEs are an example of pseudo-evaluation practice at best and are described as invalid by many. International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication [AMEC]

(2017), for instance, presents a list of 22 reasons why AVEs shouldn't be used. The reasons can be summarized as follows:

- *Advertising and public relations are not equivalent.* AVEs confuse advertising with editorial. Advertising initiatives and messages are controlled, always positive and addressed to interrupt audiences for drawing attention. Editorial is not controlled, could be negative as it comes from a third-party viewpoint, and for this reason has more credibility than advertising.
- *AVEs confuse cost with value.* The two concepts are totally different and bear no relationships to each other.
- *AVEs take no account of qualitative coverage and target audiences.* AVEs provide a quantitative metric that does not provide any insights concerning, for instance, the quality of messages or the relevant issues discussed. Additionally, they reward mass media outlets at the expense of low-readership news outlets.
- *There is no standard to measure AVEs.* AVEs measurement is based on different methodologies developed by each provider, which makes the metric not transferable between suppliers.

Another critical and much-debated topic among communication scholars is the return on investment (ROI). More specifically, ROI has been a much-discussed issue within the public relations field for many decades (e.g., Macnamara 2004, 2006), with three arguments presented by academics and practitioners that could be described as hardline, alternative, and disapproving.

The *hardline approach* is the one intended to provide the most faithful reproduction of ROI financial calculation in communication processes. This means expressing the contribution of communication in monetary terms, by assessing (i) resulting earnings (e.g., percent of increase in share value, percent of sales increase); (ii) cost reductions (e.g., reduction of production or managerial costs following a change in employees' behavior); (iii) cost savings resulting from risk reduction (e.g., thanks to improved relations with stakeholders there are lower risks related to possible litigation and ensuing costs).

The *alternative approach* suggests some alternative methods to calculate the economic value of communication, including cost-benefit analysis, cost-efficacy relationship, and social ROI (Watson & Likely, 2013).

It is worth noting that an increasing number of communication measurement specialists adopt a *disapproving approach*, by arguing that ROI shall not apply to communication processes for at least two reasons. First, the most significant results of communication are long-term ones and have no economic implications. Second, communication activities are frequently carried out along with other activities; thus, it is difficult to calculate ROI for each of them. Consequently, they opine that ROI in communication is concerned with reaching the objectives that have been set down, so they relate to the term return on objectives (ROOs). Besides ROO, many other indicators exist that have been used alternatively to ROI.

Macnamara (2014) illustrated four variations of ROI proposed by Likely, Rockland, and Weiner (2006) for evaluating media publicity:

- ROI (return on impressions) is the number of people in a company's target group who have been exposed to the message net of the costs borne to reach them.
- ROMI (return on media impact) is the statistical relations between media coverage quality/quantity and variations linked with sales data.
- ROTI (return on target influence) – in other words, the degree of change taking place in the target public. ROTI is arrived at by comparing data before and after the communication activity, minus the investments made to carry out the latter.
- ROE (return on expectations) is the public's expectations that have been fulfilled by communication activities.
- ROEM (return on earned media) is the same as the AVE.

ROI remains one of the most challenging measures for communication practitioners and it is considered the "Holy Grail" also in the digital media environment (Fisher, 2009). So far, the difficulty in identifying a shared method for measuring social media ROI has encouraged academics and practitioners to modify its original meaning, from return on investment to return on influence (Martin, 2011), or realization of influence (Solis, 2012). A multifaceted view on social media ROI emerges with three main streams of thought and research (Fisher, 2009; Gilfoil & Jobs, 2012):

1 *Deniers* believe social media ROI cannot be measured and suggest the focus should be on metrics other than ROI, such as reach and branding impact (Filisko, 2011).
2 *Definers* believe social media ROI can be measured by using clear-cut definitions and perspective exclusively, such as measuring social media investments customers make when they digitally engage with brands (Blanchard, 2009; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).
3 *The Dedicated* believe that social media ROI can be measured by using and integrating different frameworks and metrics (Murdough, 2009; Nair, 2011).

While considering these different perspectives, if communication practitioners intend to measure social media ROI, they also need to accurately define their performance objectives and identify costs.

We can cluster impacts of social media relations into three different categories (see Table 25.7):

1 *Engagement and consumption*. Media relations activities intend to enhance the visibility of organizational content, the interaction and participation of digital users, and finally the development of social connections. Examples of social media KPIs are: return visit rate; the time spent on the website; conversational rate; response rate; percent rate of shared content; percent rate of positive comments about the company; and engagement rate (Michaelleander.me 2017).
2 *Containment*. Media relations could be used for limiting negative actions or behaviors toward organizations, such as in a crisis. In this regard, the main digital KPIs are the reduction of bounce rate; the reduction of unsubscription rate; the reduction of RSS feed/newsletter deactivation; and the reduction of unlike and unfollow rate.

Table 25.7 Metrics per each Accountability Aim.

Engagement and consumption aim	Containment aim	Conversion aim
Number of unique visitors	Cost savings	Opt-in registration score/newsletter sign-up rate
Return visit		
Comment rate	Mail bounce rate	Email-open rate/email click through rate
Product relationships	Inventory levels	Pay per click traffic volume
Site/social media traffic	Percent negative reviews	Acquisition rate
Response rate	Call rate	Mail count
Engagement rate	Average resolution time	Chat count
Lead volume	Amplification rate	Subscriber rate
Net promoter score	Unsubscribe rate	Brochure download rate
Redirect rate	Negative reviews	Average order value
Page per session	Abandoned rate	Sales per channel
Social media reach influence	Negative comments	Sales per visits
Map of tone	Cost per lead	Conversation rate/social media share rate

Source: Authors.

Box 25.2 Automated ROI Calculation

The Center for Sales Strategy, for instance, has published a digital ROI calculator, as illustrated in the following Figure 25.4.

Return on Investment is calculated by taking into account the total investment per digital campaign, the cost per thousand of impressions, the CTR, the conversion percentage, and the projected revenue per conversions. Similarly, Hubspot.com has developed a digital ROI calculator (Figure 25.5).

The second example takes into account the number of visitors, the number of leads, the number of customers, and the sales price per customer. As mentioned before, there is no a standard to calculate the social media ROI but it can vary according to specific aims and costs.

Digital ROI Calculator

Enter the variables of your *digital* campaign in the green cells:

Total Investment	$	150.00	
Cost per Thousand (CPM)	$	1.50	
Total Impressions		100,000	
Click Through Rate (.1%, .2%, etc.)		5.00	%
Total # of Clicks		5,000	
Cost Per Click	$	0.03	
Conversion Percentage (5%, 10%, etc.)		4	%
Number of Conversions		200	
Cost Per Conversion	$	0.75	
Projected Revenue Per Conversion ($250, $500, etc.)	$	250.00	
Total Revenue from All Conversions	$	50,000.00	
Return on Investment	**$**	**49,850.00**	

Figure 25.4 An example of a digital ROI calculator. Source: http://olc.thecenterforsalesstrategy.com/resources/digital-roi-calculator, 2017.

ROI CALCULATOR

This calculator simulates the potential return on investment that your could realize by conducting inbound marketing with HubSpot software.

Enter your current metrics to calculate your potential results, then scroll down to view them.

Monthly Visitors	10000
Monthly Leads	12
Monthly Customers	14
Monthly Sales Price per Customer	145

Figure 25.5 An example of a digital ROI calculator. Source: https://www.hubspot.com/roi-calculator?monthlyVisitorsChart=10000&monthlyLeadsChart=12&monthlyCustomersChart=14&monthlyRevenueChart=145, 2017.

3 *Conversion aim*. Media relations could stimulate real and concrete action by digital users. In this case, main digital KPIs focus on: increasing newsletter subscriptions or the number of followers; generation of leads; or growing download of informative material (coupons, brochures, or documents).

By taking into account investments and costs, the various social media platforms have tried to provide practitioners with useful tools for automatically calculating social media ROI (Box 25.2).

Conclusions

In the contemporary media scenario, assessing the effectiveness of a media relations strategy has become quite complex. On one side, public companies have more opportunity to understand in near real-time what impact their media relations had, thanks to the fact that metrics are more quickly and readily available for online and social media. On the other side, interdependencies among conventional and new media are creating new challenges for evaluation practices.

This chapter summarized the commonly used metrics to assess the level of visibility that organizations receive in the media, the so-called publicity. Then the effects of publicity on various audiences and the consequent impact on organizational goals were discussed.

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