

# PARAMETERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION: TYPOLOGY, HIERARCHY AND EFFECTS ON USERS

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## Abstract

Social networks have a major impact on people, both individually and collectively. In order to be well informed and to know how to efficiently use communication through social networks, various parameters have been invented with the help of which one can measure both the performance of individual users and those of advertising campaigns initiated by different companies. Also, the communication parameters through social networks help us evaluate the efficiency of their use and determine when and how we need to improve the communication strategy so as to achieve our goals. Through this article I intend to synthesize the relevant data existing in the specialized literature regarding the communication parameters through social networks and to contribute to deepening the knowledge on how to rank parameters and their effects on the users of social networks.

**Keywords:** *algorithms of online communication, online communication, effects of online communication, hierarchy of online communication parameters, social networks, social media metrics.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet and social networks have changed both the way we communicate and the way people relate at work, in society and in the family.

The huge impact of social networks on most people determined the initiation of multidisciplinary research for a deeper knowledge of them and to establish parameters by which the magnitude of their effects can be assessed, both at individual and community level.

As knowledge in this field deepens, various algorithms were created in order to help collect, process and rank data resulting from the communication process, such as: the frequency of use for each type of communication platform; the number of connections made between people who post texts, photos, movies, music, etc. and those who access them; the value and timeliness

of the posted content; the reactions of those accessing the content (like, view, reach, comment, etc.). This aforementioned data, to which we can add the increase and reduction in the number of new hits, represents the basis for creating communication parameters and evaluating the effects of communication through social networks.

As is well known, there is widespread acceptance of the conclusion that the world is undergoing permanent change. As a consequence, social communication networks are also subject to constant renewal.

This conclusion, which reflects the evolution of the world, necessarily requires the process of permanent monitoring of social networks in order to measure both the effectiveness of communication through these means and the known and predictable effects of this type of communication.

## 2. DEFINITION, CONTENT AND TYPES OF COMMUNICATION PARAMETERS THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

### Defining the communication parameters through social networks

As in many other fields of activity, there is no unanimously accepted point of view regarding the definition of communication parameters through social networks and their usefulness. This conclusion is apparent from the definitions and views set out below.

Dvir-Gvirsman defines social media communication parameters as "the quantified representation of users' engagement with content posted on social media (i.e., interaction scores)." (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2023)

Kocisova & Starchon consider that “social media marketing metrics represent invaluable tools for marketers in order to measure, evaluate, and optimize their social media strategies.” (Kocisova, & Starchon, 2023)

For his part, Gyant Nia believes that “social media metrics are different data points used to define how your social media marketing is impacting your business. You can use social media metrics to know which social strategies make a difference for your business’s bottom line.” (Gyant, 2023)

Christina Newberry states that “social media metrics are data points that measure how well your social media strategy is performing – and help you understand how you can improve. (...) They also reveal how much effort and money you spend, and how much you get in return.” (Newberry, 2023)

Experts at Sprinkrl believe that “social media metrics are data sets that quantitatively assess the effectiveness of your social media initiatives” (Sprinkrl Team, 2023). In a similar vein to experts at Sprinkrl, their counterparts at Khoros define social media metrics as “the key to understanding whether social media efforts are paying off.” Because they “help you know how well you are hitting your goals and inform whether you should continue with or drop a specific strategy.” (Khoros Staff, 2023)

Although the definitions presented are partially different, we can see that there are points of convergence between the opinions expressed by well-known experts in the field. Corroborating the common elements of the presented definitions, we can conclude that social media metrics are data points used for assessing the effectiveness of business and to help companies to improve their communications strategy in order to achieve their objectives.

### **The content of communication parameters through social networks**

With the help of communication parameters through social networks we can measure data regarding: Who posts? What do they post? Who do they post to? (audience) On which platform do they post? And from analyzing this data we can draw conclusions regarding communication and business performance.

This conclusion emerges from Christina Newberry’s article which states that through communication parameters we can track the performance achieved through communication by measuring: the number of people who saw the post, the number of people who liked it, reshared it or commented on it, how much time was spent on communication; what financial resources were used with the communication campaign and what were the results achieved (Newberry, 2023) It should also be noted that data used by and about social networks shows us how competitive the business is using benchmarks that measure the performance of the Return of Investment (ROI).

In order to have a more accurate picture of the efficiency of communication through social media, some experts use different methods, including combining parameters (Dalomba, 2022).

Given that the volume of data to be collected and processed is very large (“On any given day, an average of 1.4 billion people log into Facebook, and an average of 95 million photos are uploaded onto Instagram and Social Listening helps you not to miss out on any important mention.” - Gan, 2023), individuals and entities use computer programs and algorithms to collect the data of interest, process them and draw conclusions on how to use social media communication strategies.

The algorithms are designed to organize “users feeds based on relevancy” (McKee, 2023) and consist of “a set of formulas developed for a computer to perform a certain function (...) [they] are critical for developing content promotion strategies” (Stec, 2023).

It is important to know that each social communication platform uses a specific set of parameters and algorithms because “social media success looks different from brand to brand: each business with its unique goals” (Khoros Staff, 2023). It should also be said that each online communication platform has its own policies for using algorithms, which is why it is necessary to permanently monitor the communication activity in order to have correct results about user performance and the campaigns initiated by different companies. It should also be mentioned that each social

communication platform periodically upgrades its parameters and algorithms to be tracked depending on the trend of the field in which the company using the respective communication platform operates and the preferences of loyal and potential customers (Kocisova & Starchon, 2023).

For example, if the loyal and/or potential audience prefers video posts, infographics or other specific topics, the result of using parameters will indicate a numerical and percentage increase or decrease in the audience, whether or not the user posts content that the audience likes. Therefore, social media parameters help us understand and know what to watch from audience's reactions and, depending on these reactions (results), adapt or even change the communication strategy. On the other hand, quite frequent changes in parameters and algorithms can influence the correctness of measurements and interpretations, so users must constantly monitor these changes and "stay update and adapt their strategies accordingly" (Kocisova & Starchon, 2023).

### **Number and type of communication parameters**

I did not find an unanimously accepted and scientifically substantiated point of view regarding the total number of communication parameters through social networks. If Jim Sterne estimated that there are 100 parameters of communication (i-SCOOP staff, n.d.), Gan Bryan believes that their number can be as high as possible because on the online market you can monitor and measure almost anything (Gan, 2023) and "social media is evolving at a lightning fast pace" (i-SCOOP staff, n.d.). In a manner close to Gan's, Seiter Courtney appreciates that "there are so many different KPIs (key performance indicators) that it can be tough to keep them straight sometimes" (Seiter, 2015). Therefore, it is important to focus on those parameters that are relevant to our objectives, otherwise there is a risk of accumulating a very large volume of data from which it would be more difficult to draw conclusions that would lead us to properly evaluate the communication strategy and the solutions to improve it (Asif, 2023). In line with this conclusion, some experts

in measuring the parameters of social media communication recommend us to follow a certain number of parameters because only those matter, are crucial, are top, are essential, or the most important.

For example, Lacey Faught believes that only 5 parameters are important in order to establish their hierarchy and the effects they generate. In descending order of importance these parameters are: share, direct message, comment, like, and see. (Faught, 2020)

Sprinklr experts recommend us to follow only 7 parameters of social media communication: reach, engagement, impressions, click-through rate (C.T.R.), conversion rate, audience growth rate and response time to customer complaints (Sprinklr Team, 2023).

If for Whitney Margot only 8 parameters are top - social media reach, engagement, amplification rate, social media referrals, click-through-rate, bounce rate, conversions and conversions rate and cost per conversion, (Whitney, 2022), Gyant Nia believes that only 9 parameters are essential - referral traffic, click-through rate (CTR), conversion rate (CVR), cost-per-click (CPC), share of voice, impressions, reach and engagement rate. (Gyant, 2023)

Carly Hill, based on a survey conducted by Sprout, in which 255 social marketers participated, estimates that of all the parameters related to communication through social platforms, 10 are the most important in 2023, compared to 2022: "follower growth and audience size; customer satisfaction and feedback collected through social media; impressions; awareness and reach of social media content; customer retention and loyalty through social media engagement; social media referral traffic and website visits; brand sentiment analysis and social media campaigns and ads; engagement metrics such as likes, comment and share" (Hill, 2023).

For Kimberlee Leonard, only 13 parameters matter, which she considers essential: reach, impressions, engagement rate, amplification rate, audience growth rate, video views, virality rate, video completion rate, net promoter score (NPS), click-to-rate (CTR), conversion rate, cost-per-click (CPC), cost per thousand impressions. (Kimberlee, 2023)

Cristina Newberry recommends that in 2023 we follow 17 parameters: engagement rate, amplification rate, virality rate, reach, impressions, video views, video completion rate, audience growth rate, click-through rate (CTR), conversion rate, cost-per-click (CPC), cost per thousand impressions (CPM), average response time, customer satisfaction (CSAT) score, net promoter score (NPS), social share of voice (SSoV) and social sentiment. (Newberry, 2023).

As evidenced by the examples presented, experts in the field have different opinions about the importance of social media communication parameters. The explanation is that the importance of the parameters depends on the type of user, the type of activity carried out by the users, the objectives of each and even the social communication platform used. For example, a large number of likes and sees can create false impressions of success. In reality, if likes and sees are not followed by comment, direct message and engagement, then for a user who seeks to increase the number of loyal customers and respectively the volume of sales, it will not have a significant practical value. In other words, the large number of likes and sees will flatter the user's vanity (because these parameters are called "vanity metrics" - Rogers, 2018). As a consequence, each individual and organization (institution, company, community, group, etc.) must establish the type and number of parameters he wants to follow, in direct correlation with the objectives of the business and those of improving the communication activity through social networks.

### **Types of parameters of social media communication**

The parameters of social media communication can be divided into two broad groups: qualitative and quantitative (Gyant, 2023; Chorev, 2023; Ashraf, 2023; Jones, 2023; Sanchez, 2023; Fallstrom, 2021; Parida & Kumar, 2020; Academy Hootsuite, n.d.; Benchmark Team, 2023).

The qualitative parameters are, according to experts from the American Marketing Association, "subjective judgements, based of true scientific assessment" (American Marketing Association, 2018). Jones Aisha

believes that qualitative parameters "represent data points that cannot easily be quantified but still provide valuable insight into the performance of your social media community management efforts" (Jones, 2023). Benchmark experts also believe that qualitative parameters are difficult to measure, but they are important because, although "they are in the intangibles, the subjective value drivers sit at the foundation of successful brands." (Benchmark Team, 2023). Ashraf Hedaa believes that qualitative parameters "are unquantifiable metrics that offer insight that (...) help brands understand the intangible aspects of influencer marketing." (Ashraf, 2023). Chorev Raz agrees with the opinions previously expressed by Jones, Ashraf and the Benchmark Team, saying that measuring qualitative parameters is more complicated and therefore needs to be done by experts. (Chorev, 2023).

Examples of qualitative metrics: "conversation drivers, influence, sentiment," (American Marketing Association, 2018); "tone, quality of your content, interactions and feedback"; (A.I. and LinkedIn community, 2023); "share of voice, message resonance and average tonality," (Gan, 2023); "understanding the tone of community interactions, evaluating the relevance and value of shared information, assessing the strength of connections within the community" (Jones, 2023); "Brand credibility, brand awareness, brand trust, sales enablement, consumer education, industry influence, consumer feedback and engagement" (Benchmark Team, 2023).

**Quantitative metrics** "are numerical measures derived from a statistically significant sample size." (American Marketing Association, 2018)

Examples of quantitative parameters: "reach, impressions, click, conversions and ROI" (A.I. and LinkedIn community, 2023); "follower growth, engagement rate and conversions such as email sign ups, quantified leads and sales transactions" (Academy Hootsuite); follower count, engagement rate, impressions click-through rate and ROI, churn rate, customer lifetime value, loyalty" (Jones, 2023).

In addition to classifying social media communication parameters into qualitative and quantitative, social media communication experts also group the parameters of communication

through these communication channels into: categories (Savkin, 2019), essential parameters (Keyhole, 2023), top parameters (Calzon, 2023; Whitney, 2022), important parameters (Aitalieva, 2022), key parameters (Deren, 2023; Sanchez, 2023; Sprinkrl Team, 2023), crucial parameters (Chawlani, 2023; Fallstrom, 2021), parameters that matter (Griffis, 2022), etc.

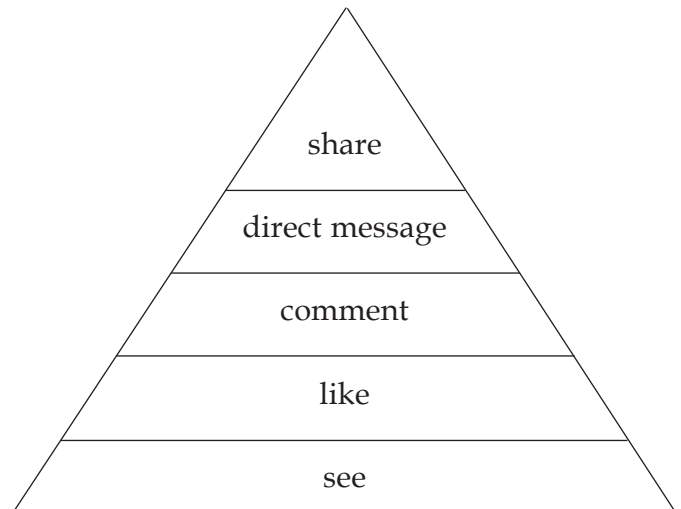
The number and types of communication parameters through social media are important to be known and understood, but it is even more important to realize that achieving the objectives we have set is achieved through wise choice and use and correlate both qualitative and quantitative parameters that matter. In other words, we should not pursue everyone, but only those who are directly connected to our goals. (Hill, 2023; Gyant, 2023; Deren, 2023; Whitney, 2022; Gan, 2023)

### 3. HIERARCHY OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION PARAMETERS

The existence of two main categories of social media users - individuals and companies (organizations, communities, institutions, associations) requires an adequate approach to social media communication to this reality. If individual users are mainly interested in connectivity and increasing the number of likes, loves and coffees, companies need to enlarge their audience, transaction volume and the number of loyal customers. On the other hand, state institutions are interested in satisfying the requirements of community members.

Given these aspects, experts in the field generated several ways of evaluating the efficiency of communication through social media and, implicitly, proposed a hierarchy of communication parameters.

Lacey Faught uses a pyramid model in which the most important parameter is "share" and the least important is "see." The author's argument for this hierarchy is based on the different degree of engagement of those who access the content of a post. Details in the figure below (Faught, 2020):



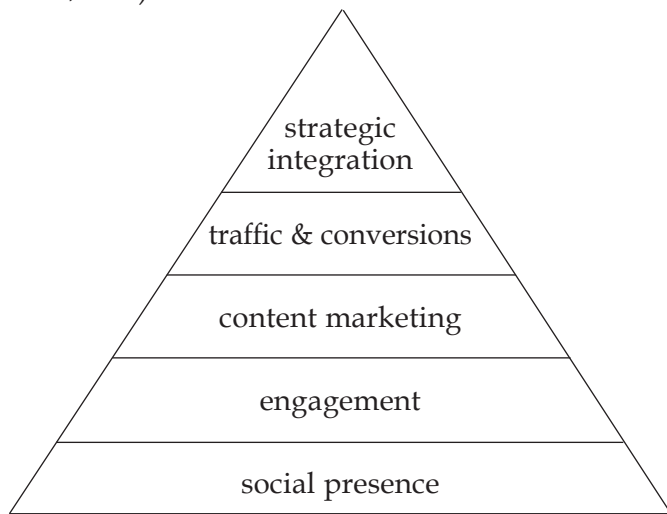
**Fig. 1 Social media metrics hierarchy, variant 1. (Faught, 2020)**

- the "sea" parameter reflects the lowest degree of engagement of those who accessed the post - they saw it but had no reactions;
- the "like" parameter, located immediately above "see" in the pyramid, shows us that those who saw the content of the post had a minimal reaction - like, that is, they liked it;
- the "comment" parameter, located above "like" shows an increase in the involvement of those who have seen the post and post, in turn, a comment - which can be positive, neutral or negative;
- the parameter located above the "comment" on the pyramid is "direct message" which shows an increased interest of the people who have accessed the posted content and enter into dialogue with the author / area of the post;
- The most important parameter, according to the author, is "share" because people who have seen/read the post appreciate it and redirect it to relatives, friends and acquaintances, that is, they promote it.

The model proposed by Lacey Faught is useful both for evaluating communication performance at the individual level, especially bloggers, vloggers, influencers and journalists as well as at company level (organization, institution, community).

Another model for ranking the parameters of social media communication is the one proposed by Visme. This model is also pyramidal and uses

5 parameters. Details in the figure below (Visme staff, n.d.):

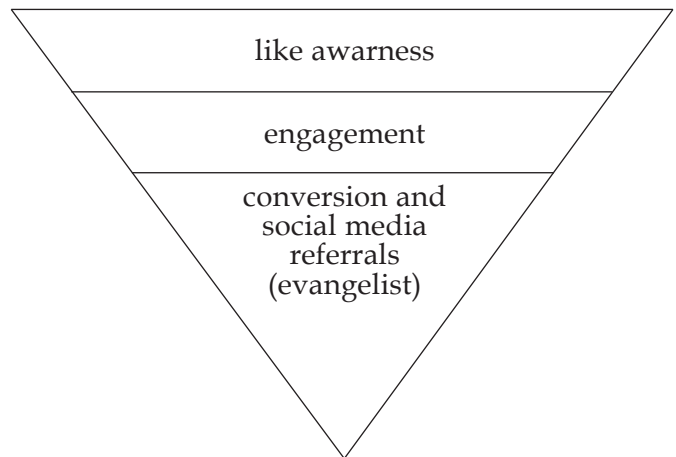


**Fig. 2. Social media metrics hierarchy, variant 2.**  
(Visme staff, n.d.)

- “social presence” – is located at the base of the pyramid and represents the stage in which the user chooses the social communication platform;
- “engagement” – is located immediately above the “social presence” parameter and shows the stage in which people access the content posted on the social network;
- “content marketing” – is located at level 3 of the pyramid and represents the moment when the communication relationship begins between the one / those who post and those / those who accessed the posted content; In order to gain the trust of the audience, the author recommends using several ways of communication: blog, email, e-books, etc.;
- “traffic & conversions” – is the parameter located on the 4th level of the pyramid and illustrates the stage in which the author or authors of the posted content manage to convert those who accessed the content into users who promote the content as it is or improve it, after dialogue with the initiator or initiators;
- “Strategic Integration” – is at the top of the pyramid and represents the moment when the efforts of the communication initiator or initiators are crowned with success by fulfilling the objective of promoting their ideas and selling their products through social networks, and those who accessed the posts become

loyal customers and even promoters of the company’s products.

Angela Hausman uses an inverted pyramid to illustrate the importance of social media communication parameters. The least important, according to the author, are like and awareness – located at the base of the pyramid – followed by engagement – located in the middle of the pyramid – and the most important elements are located at the top of the pyramid – conversions and social media referrals (“courtesy of Search Engine Watch” - Hausman, 2013) – parameters that symbolize the conversion of those who accessed the content of the post into evangelists, that is, into lawyers and promoters of the products of the company that initiated the advertising campaign through social media. (Hausman, 2013)



**Fig.3. Social media hierarchy, variant 3.**  
(Hausman, 2013)

Carly Hill summarizes the opinions regarding the hierarchy of social media communication parameters, stating that “there is no magic parameter by which to measure the effectiveness of communication through social networks and their impact on business” (Hill, 2023) As a result, the number and type of communication parameters depend on the type of business and the objective of the business.

For example, at the level of individuals who do not have businesses but are only interested in having as large a group of people as possible to interact with, the number of likes (the so-called vanity parameter) and comparison with other users (who has more likes) matter. For profit-oriented companies, the most important

parameters are customer satisfaction, conversion, cost-per click and ROI (return of investment).

The hierarchy of social media communication parameters is useful because it helps us decide which ones to pursue and evaluate so as to achieve our goals.

#### 4. EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION PARAMETERS ON USERS

The effects of social media communication parameters on users fall into two broad categories: positive and negative, but the evaluation of the effects is different depending on the type of users.

##### Positive effects

Ordinary individual users are usually interested in likes, loves, coffees parameters because an increase in their numbers generates a state of well-being as a result of stimulating the secretion of dopamine (the hormone of happiness) by the brain (Dalomba, 2022; Seiter, 2016). At the same time, an increase in the number of likes/loves/coffees also means greater notoriety/visibility. If individual users are bloggers/vloggers or journalists, they can receive money from those who use their posts as support for the advertising spots.

Other positive effects: facilitating connection with family members and friends, facilitating online learning and research, facilitating banking operations and performing work tasks remotely. (Dalomba, 2022; Seiter, 2016)

Positive effects at the level of companies, organizations/institutions/communities (Asif 2023; Gyant, 2023; Sprinkler Team 2023; Mckee, 2023) consist of:

- help to know the audience;
- providing quantitative and qualitative elements (data) through which performance can be evaluated and to establish the manner in which to adapt the communication strategy in order to achieve objectives;
- help in monitoring the activity of your own company (institution, organization, etc.) and of the competitors and in taking the decision

- to improve the communication strategy in order to become better than your competitors;
- help in assessing success (chances of success), respectively the strategy and activity of your own company.

##### Negative effects

At the individual level, the “chase” for likes, loves, coffees can generate addiction and those who are in this situation can get depressed if the number of likes of their content is reduced. (Christopher, 2023) Added to the risk of depression is the fear of being abandoned by friends and acquaintances (FMO) and the risk of meeting strangers with bad intentions. (Dalomba, 2022; Seiter, 2016; Branwell, 2019)

Also, individual users addicted to likes, loves and coffees are very interested in the similar performance of their competitors. When the number of appreciations of their competitors increases, then the risk of depression arises again. As a result of this situation, Instagram decided to hide the performance of other individual users. The initiative sparked controversy, but most users agreed with it. This initiative was also taken up by Facebook. (Sanders, 2023; Criddle, 2021)

At both individual and company level (organization, group, community, institution) there are risks such as (Queensland Government Australia, 2023):

- “account loss or deletion;
- unauthorized changes to: account emails, usernames and passwords;
- hijacked accounts.”

Researchers have managed to invent an algorithm with which to determine the main character traits of those who “collect” likes on Facebook (Hodson, 2015; Branwell, 2019):

- after evaluating 10 likes, with the help of the algorithm, artificial intelligence can make the psychological profile of the user who posted the content appreciated with likes, better than his work colleagues;
- after 150 likes, with the help of the algorithm, artificial intelligence can know the user better than his family members;

After 300 likes, artificial intelligence can make a psychological profile of the user better than his or her spouse.

On the same topic of the effects that social media has on users, Wake Ciara states that “technology has the ability to predict our personalities and essentially know more about you than your friends and family do” (Wake, 2017).

This situation raises concerns and fears that user data may be used for hidden purposes. There are opinions and even arguments that the psychological data of many Americans was used to influence the presidential election in 2016 and 2020 in the US. (National Intelligence Council, 2021; Homeland Security, 2021)

Companies can also suffer from the algorithm that determines the psychological profile of loyal and potential customers. Because there is a risk of using their data to influence them to stop buying the products and services of competing companies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

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The parameters of social media communication are dual because they are simultaneously “a social tool and a measurement system,” which places them in an interface position between “the news organization and users.” (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2023)

There are divergences both in defining the parameters of communication through social media and in establishing the parameters which matter in the process of evaluating the efficiency of communication through social media. (Lemel, 2021, p. 1).

Although some experts state that using social media communication parameters is a way of achieving business success (“social media measurement isn’t a nice-to-have – it’s a must” – Hill, 2023; “social media metrics are imperative to social strategy” – Carmicheal, 2023; “Social media metrics (...) help identify how successfully you are running social media campaigns and where you should modify them” – Aitalieva, 2022), measuring business performance (Calzon, 2023), respectively measuring the effectiveness of a social media advertising campaign (Friedman, 2018), Dvir Gvirsman believes that the results of monitoring and evaluating communication parameters are “more elusive” due to the algorithms used by

social communication platforms that are a mystery. (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2023) In a similar vein to Dvir Gvirsman, Gan Bryan appreciates that “metrics may not always be reflective of a client’s overall campaign success” (Gan, 2023). Also, specialists from Sprinklr believe that it is questionable whether the use of social media communication parameters brings success in business (Sprinklr Team, 2023). Referring to the usefulness of social media communication parameters, Fallstrom Rena wrote: “communications metrics are a controversial subject (...) [because] comms professionals don’t always agree which metrics are the best indicators of success” (Fallstrom, 2021). Madison Ivory disagrees with other experts when she appreciated the use vanity metrics to improve business results because she considers them a waste of time and “the most common false idols of analytics” (Madison, 2012).

Therefore, the number and types of social media communication parameters are important, “but not all metrics are of equal importance” (Gyant, 2023). Therefore, the most important thing is to select and evaluate those parameters that contribute to achieving our goals (Deren, 2023) and use them wisely (Sanchez, 2023), that is, we do not have to track (monitor) everyone (Asif, 2023). Also, in order to evaluate the chances of success of a communication campaign through social media, it is necessary both a multidimensional understanding of them and a correlation of the results of monitoring the quantitative parameters with the qualitative ones. Moreover, “marketers need to be cautious in interpreting and relying on metrics without considering potential biases or limitations inherent in the data sources” because “social media often functions as an influencing touchpoint rather than a direct conversion driver, making it challenging to accurately attribute conversions or sales solely to social media efforts” (Kocisova & Starchon, 2023)

The collection and processing of data resulting from monitoring communication parameters with the help of social media in advertising and other campaigns represent the stages of a laborious and continuous process and that is why some experts recommend us to use specialized companies. (Chorev, 2023)



Knowing the effects of using communication parameters through social media represents a process that must be permanently in our attention so that they can undergo changes because social communication platforms also constantly evolving. At the same time, by knowing the effects we will know how to use the beneficial ones and protect ourselves from those that can affect us in a negative way.

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