

Marketing Opportunities in Social Media Report on an analysis of the Twitter stream

Summary

Search works very effectively for marketers because user intention is such a strong signal. We have found that precise intention is present in social. In some ways, intention is even richer in social than it is in search. We show in some studies of Twitter that it is present in sufficient volume to justify marketer interest. The issue is how to detect it and act on it. Social is a gold mine as rich or richer than search.

Everyone believes that social is a huge (search level huge) opportunity for marketers. Brands have mostly moved in cautious steps for at least two reasons:

1. They are worried about messaging into a medium where they are not welcome, where they will be seen as an unwelcome intruder.
2. There is not a clear understanding of what the opportunity is really in detail. In search, marketing messages are responding to queries and it is completely clear what those are. The picture with social is much trickier.

After extensive testing and experience, Solariat has learned some crucial lessons about both of these big issues. Maybe the biggest lesson is that these issues are actually not all that independent. But let's take them one at a time.

With respect to the first issue of whether brands will be "allowed in", we've seen that consumers do accept brand participation in social provided that the messages are:

1. Responsive to consumer intention
2. Useful to that intent
3. Honest

Intention is the essential issue here. There is a lot of effort now going into figuring out user characteristics like influence and interest and very generic properties of posts or tweets such as sentiment. How are these analytics going to help marketers? To a large extent, much of these efforts are GOFDM (Good Old Fashioned Direct Marketing) applied to social. Find out more about people and use that to target messages better.

Oddly, this ignores one of the biggest revolutions in marketing, the complete transformation of the discipline wrought by Google. One of the biggest insights of the Google phenomenon is that from a marketing point of view, the specific query itself completely dominated every other

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conceivable variable because it so clearly expressed intention. And here is the BIG THING we have learned:

There is an enormous amount of intention every bit as specific and immediate in social as there is in search!

That insight is really both the answer to the second issue above (what is the opportunity?) AND to the first issue (avoid being an unwelcome intruder!) The opportunity is precisely this very specific intent. AND if you respond to it with something relevant and useful then your participation is welcome and effective. The answer to the problem in social was there all along, and we experienced it every day as we typed in queries to the Google search box (where our intention was to 'get information'). The intention is something expressed and immediate, users welcome the responses and are receptive to all kinds of marketing messages – those messages do not interrupt the fundamental task.

So our first big insight is that there is very precise intention in social. In some ways, the intention in social is even richer than what occurs in search. People do not nuance their intention in search – they just type keywords about the object of their search. In social, the intention often has much more color, more descriptions about what the user wants and more descriptions of why the user wants it. Social has intention just like search but it is a different medium for expressing that intention and that opens up different opportunities.

Our second insight is that it's possible to reliably flag the actionability of speech acts, which is crucial if these acts are to be appropriate for marketers. A speech act is actionable if it's topically relevant to a brand, and if it's something that a marketer would likely have some kind of response or content for. For example, the tweet "I want a laptop" contains the topically relevant word "laptop", so is extremely actionable. Solariat's technology is able to signal actionability with high fidelity.

So there is rich, actionable intention in social. But now there is the question, how much? We have analyzed different sources of social media, but Twitter makes for an excellent case study. While there have been some reported studies that attempt to characterize opportunities in Twitter, there is little reported work on intention that goes beyond superficial surveys and informal reports. Our goal here is to quantify the opportunity more analytically. We can do this because the Solariat system is built to identify highly focused intention in social media, precisely the targets that marketers would be interested in. These are tweets that actually look like actionable queries seen in a search box. The intentions in social are actually broader than in search and our technology is able to detect these different types with high fidelity. The classification of different intentions in social turns out to be very useful to marketers who would like to craft their responses with even more precision.

In the Solariat framework, intention is signaled by what are called 'speech acts', which do one of the following:

- *States a Need*
- *Asks for Something*
- *States a Problem*
- *Makes a Positive Assertion*

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To get good estimates we analyzed a sample Tweet stream of about 40 million tweets. In order to narrow the focus we chose three important verticals: auto, consumer technology and food and narrowed this sample by some basic keyword and phrase filters. Our estimates for the overall volume of actionable tweets for these three verticals are then based on the analysis of this reduced sample. Further descriptions of the Solariat methodology, describing our careful treatment of user intent and actionability, are described in:

www.solariat.com/science/twitter_report_methodology.pdf

Results

These are the statistical results, projected over the daily Twitter stream of about 250 million Tweets per day. We refer to actionable tweets as tweets of commercial interest or TCI.

	<i>Estimated TCIs <u>per day</u></i>	<i>Percent of Twitter stream</i>
<i>Auto</i>	<i>18,000</i>	<i>0.007%</i>
<i>Consumer Tech</i>	<i>53,000</i>	<i>0.021%</i>
<i>Food</i>	<i>52,000</i>	<i>0.021%</i>

Example Tweets

AUTO

- @ knnsmiley It ' s always tough searching for the right car !
- And our cars need to get fixed .
- Do you have a favorite brand for car audio equipment ?
- I love the new Subaru commercial .
- i want a camaro so bad .. or any car for that matter
- In the market for a car
- Thinking about buying a new car nota used one , idk if will be stupid to do or save my money for something better

CONSUMER TECH

- "@ wazzebaba : Can anyone tell me d best blackberry phone in terms of battery longevity ???..... "---- bold 2
- @ Schooler90 I wanna get a Mac book pro , they sell those at best buy ?
- Can ' t wait to get my phone turned in but my phone sucks so when I get the money in gonna buy a new one :/
- I want an iPhone 4 :/
- I want my iPhone 5 !!
- iPhone or Blackberry ?

FOOD

- All I want is a pizza with green olives & bacon ... Hint hint @ Sebkooper
- Auntie Anne ' s pretzel with cheese sounds really good right about now ... # boredatwork # daydreamingaboutfood
- Better than regular yoghurt .
- Could the Atkins diet help you keep diabetes at bay ?
- Having a nice lunch with @ rjfarrand at cheesecake factory !
- Coconut Milk is a fantastically healthy alternative to cream because of it ' s high content of healthy fats .
- Panera Bread or Chinese for lunch ?
- So I found out that I like sushi
- That is great dinner at cracker barrell for 21 bucks !

Implications

As discussed in www.solariat.com/science/twitter_report_methodology.pdf, our criteria for both intent and actionability of tweets are extremely stringent. As a result, while the percentage of messages flagged as TCI's by the Solariat framework is low, they represent a potent vein of tweets for marketers. When combined with the large volumes in social media, the overall potential opportunity is undeniably huge.

We also have seen that it is in fact possible to tap this opportunity. For example, in our work with one very large publisher, we matched responses, essentially links back to the publisher, in response to intentions that matched the publisher's content. The publisher was interested in exploring Twitter as a traffic source. We saw CTR's (clickthroughs) in the range of 20%. In general, we believe that CTR's in social will fall into two tiers, with CTR's being low for interruptive messages but extremely high for relevant and conversationally appropriate responses. We believe that Solariat's unique ability to rigorously filter tweets on the basis of both intent and actionability is key to generating relevant responses. So far our experience is confirming this intuition.

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Conclusions

1. Actionable intention exists in social and it is often quite precise, in some ways like search
2. There is high volume which completes the picture of why social is such a huge opportunity
3. It is findable. Solariat's intention detection mechanisms find this precise intention with high fidelity
4. Consumers react to responses favorably if they are matched to intent and meaning

About Solariat

Solariat has introduced the first Social Response Engine. Solariat's technology analyzes millions of posts at the speed of social and finds opportunities for meaningful brand engagement. The matching technology maps intention in the social stream, and automatically connects it with the most relevant response from your business. Brands can utilize this solution across any social media channel. For more information please visit www.solariat.com or contact us at info@solariat.com.