

16.9: Analytics for social media

As with any digital marketing tactic, you need to be able to track and measure your campaigns to understand how successful they are and what you can do to improve them.

As we have shown, most platforms have native analytics, but because you do not actually host your presence, custom tracking is limited. Smaller businesses, in particular, rely on the built-in tracking offered by the various platforms, although new third-party tracking services are emerging and offering competitive and sophisticated tools, often for a fee. In some cases, it is also possible to integrate tracking to some extent if you are directing traffic to a web property that you own.

Web analytics software such as Google Analytics can also be used for social media tracking. On Facebook, tracking script can be inserted in applications and tabs where content is served through an iFrame. When sharing links to your own site and content, campaign tracking parameters can be used to track the source of visits and report on them in your web analytics tool. Here is an example of a url with a tracking tag.

is: www.redandyellow.co.za/5-way...er-women/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AugNewsletter

The campaign tracking tag appended on the end of the URL is: `?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AugNewsletter`

Click tracking with URL shorteners for social media

URL shorteners offer analytics that show how many users are clicking on links, when they are clicking, and where in the world they are. When you share links on services like Twitter, you should be tracking this data. When selecting a URL shortener, consider whether or not they keep the click analytics private. URL shortening services provide an easy way to share long links by generating a short URL that redirects to the original link. This is especially important when sharing links in messages with limited character counts.

There are several URL shortening services: bitly, goo.gl and ow.ly are three examples, and some websites have their own bespoke services, such as nyti.ms for The New York Times, which is excellent for reinforcing brand recognition. Twitter also has their own bespoke service, and no longer requires you to use one of the URL shortening service. Twitter will automatically alter the length of any URL provided in the tweet to 23 characters.

Using URL shorteners is very effective. For example, we may want to tweet a link to Red & Yellow's online Digital marketing course. The URL to a post may be

<https://www.redandyellow.co.za/cours...keting-course/>

That's 64 characters!

Using bitly, a URL shortening service, the link becomes <http://bit.ly/1jpbs4e>. It's now just 21 characters long, and can be tracked.

Even better, some link shorteners allow you to customise your link, so the result could be bit.ly/R&YCourse, which is much easier to read and share.

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