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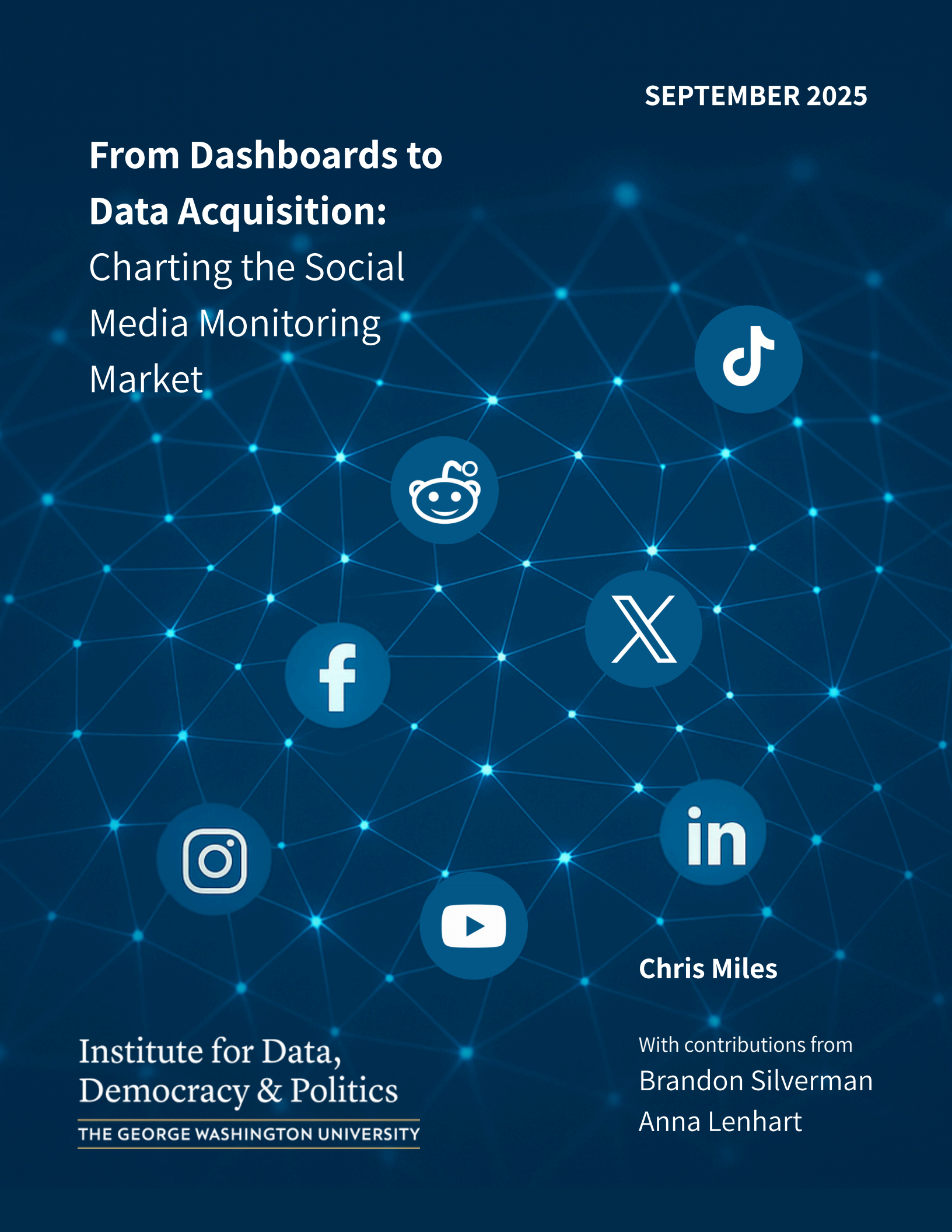
From Dashboards to Data Acquisition: Charting the Social Media Monitoring Market



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Executive Summary

- This report offers a better understanding of the Social Media Monitoring (SMM) market with a focus on how companies acquire data. This work took place as academic and civil society researchers struggle to access reliable social media data to study the information environment.
- The SMM market is massive, with well over 250 active tools listed in the 'Social Media Monitoring Products Repository' addressing broad and niche needs in diverse sectors like news and entertainment, sports, the public sector, education, finance, politics, and cybersecurity. These tools offer various options at commercial, freemium, and free rates. The landscape spans everything from major enterprise products used by Fortune 500 companies to small startups to individual tooling services that brands can use piecemeal.
- Data sourcing for commercial SMM tools is often opaque. While some tools have direct (paid and unpaid) API partnerships with social media platforms, many seem to rely on scraping or purchasing third-party data. It's difficult to trace exactly where even the biggest tools get their data — SMM companies aren't immediately transparent about their data sources.
- Direct access to social media platform data is rare and inconsistent. Few commercial tools have direct, sustained connections to social media platforms like Facebook, X, or YouTube. Access to reliable platform data is fragmented, and many tools seem to struggle to maintain consistent data pipelines. Moreover, social media platform relationships with commercial tools are selective and uneven. Direct access is not granted broadly.
- Indirect data access is common. Several tools appear to circumvent direct access to social media platform data, instead utilizing scraping or third-party data suppliers in part or in full for data procurement. This practice seems commonplace across the commercial sector. What is unclear is whether social media platforms know this is happening and are turning a blind eye to it, or are uninterested in policing it.

REPOSITORY

Introduction

Academic and civil society researchers increasingly require data from social media companies to better understand the information environment, technology product design, and social issues.[1] Unfortunately, access to this data is fraught and deteriorating. Social media platforms that enter formal research partnerships typically do so with only a select group of highly regarded scholars, and these partnerships are usually governed by the platform's own terms.[2] At the same time, social media platforms retain the power to suspend researcher accounts and may take legal action against those who violate their terms of service.[3] In recent years, major social media platforms have restricted access to their APIs or made it prohibitively expensive, further hindering research efforts.[4] Moreover, platforms regularly block apps and browser extensions designed to support user-driven data donations or limit the amount of data available through such initiatives.[5]

Meanwhile, a large, profitable, and diverse market of commercial tools exists with the express purpose of providing brands and creators with access to data — the Social Media Monitoring (SMM) market. SMM tools analyze what's happening across social media platforms, blog posts, forums, news aggregators, review sites, podcasts, tracking mentions, measuring sentiment, flagging trends, and benchmarking content performance.[6] SMM companies maintain market value through their insights and accessibility, even using their data to produce free industry insights that drill down on core

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[1] Shiffman, Naomi and Silverman, Brandon, The Case for Transparency: How Social Media Platform Data Access Leads to Real-World Change (May 07, 2025). Published online at https://iddp.gwu.edu/case-transparency, Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=5245757 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5245757.

[2] Wagner, M. W. (2023). Independence by permission. *Science*, *381*(6656), 388–391. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adi2430.

[3] Edelson, L., & McCoy, D. (2021). We research misinformation on Facebook. It just disabled our accounts. *The New York Times*, *10*. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/10/opinion/facebook-misinformation.html; see also *Van Buren v. United States*. (n.d.). Knight First Amendment Institute. Retrieved April 30, 2025, from http://knightcolumbia.org/cases/van-buren-v-united-states.

[4] Brown, M. A., Lukito, J., Greenfield, J., Chen, B., Graham, S., Shugars, S., & Pruden, M. L. (2024). *The State of Digital Media Data Research, 2024*. https://hdl.handle.net/2152/125330; Tromble, R. (2021). Where Have All the Data Gone? A Critical Reflection on Academic Digital Research in the Post-API Age. *Social Media + Society*, *7*(1), 2056305121988929. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121988929.

[5] Sadare, O., Melvin, T., Harvey, H., Vollebregt, E., & Gilbert, S. (2023). Can Apple and Google continue as health app gatekeepers as well as distributors and developers? *NPJ Digital Medicine*, *6*, 8. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41746-023-00754-6; Van Driel, I. I., Giachanou, A., Pouwels, J. L., Boeschoten, L., Beyens, I., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2022). Promises and Pitfalls of Social Media Data Donations.

[6] SMMs draw distinctions between the terms "social monitoring" and "social listening." As one customer rep put it in our interviews, "Monitoring is like searching the ocean, listening is searching a pool." But each company defines monitoring vs listening slightly differently. In this report, we refer to these companies as "social media monitoring companies" — a term that few, if any, would dispute, though there is variance in how these companies are being defined and defining themselves in the market.

questions or social media platform changes.[7] But while demand for social insights has skyrocketed, the ways in which commercial tools access social media platform data remain opaque.[8]

This report examines SMM company practices to better understand the breadth and scope of the market, with a particular focus on the social data they collect and how they obtain it. Through a comprehensive market analysis and 21 secret shopper interviews, we reveal a complex and opaque ecosystem that operates through a mix of privileged access and data scraping. Our findings suggest that the relationship between social media platforms and social media monitoring tools is often opaque and uneven — platforms gatekeep data access while providing specialized access to a select few SMM companies. The results also indicate a fragmented system where commercial interests are served, but public interest needs remain precariously under-supported. These findings carry important implications for policymakers and highlight the urgent need for a service that can support broader public interest by offering data in a transparent and accountable manner — especially in terms of how that data is acquired.

Methods

The research was conducted in two phases between November 2024 and March 2025. Phase 1 included a general search for products that could be included in the SMM Repository.[9] The first author conducted a web search using the following search terms: "social media listening," "social monitoring" and "tools like [brand]," and reviewed industry blogs.[10] He identified over 250 tools that included at least one feature generally understood to contribute to social media monitoring and organized them into a Repository (see Appendix A). The Repository includes both commercial and free research tools,

[7] NewsWhip, like other large social monitoring companies, produces a steady range of industry reports using their data: *How newsrooms and publishers will win audiences on social in 2025*. (n.d.). https://www.newswhip.com/newswhip-social-media-research-center/.

[8] Yadav, K., & Wanless, A. (2022). *Social Listening Companies and Access to Sensitive Data*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://informationenvironment.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/PE2-Social-Listening-Companies-and-Access-to-Sensitive-Data.pdf.

[9] The full list of tools stands at over 250 and counting, and categorizes a number of different use cases that are directly or indirectly involved with the wider social monitoring process. Users are also able to see pricing and application information. This document is free and public https://airtable.com/apphRmVsFpqb4xsbF/tblLtPvSzRqzk2med/viwbA8mzlE28qcI5l?blocks=hide.

[10] An example of the industry blogs that document the largest social monitoring tools and their use cases: Mathew, W. (2021, June 7). *The Top 23 Social Media Monitoring Tools*. Meltwater. https://www.meltwater.com/en/blog/top-social-media-monitoring-tools; The Institute for Rebooting Social Media at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center put together a similar tools repository focused on the transparency space: *Transparency Tools Landscape*. (n.d.). https://rebootingsocialmedia.notion.site/Transparency-Tools-Landscape-deb3f15567bf4f5e8e8184f9480445b8.

or “freemium” products that are given pro bono to certain groups, like researchers and journalists. Phase 2 narrowed in on products that require a subscription service (sort the Repository field Business Model = Commercial or Commercial/ Freemium) in order to better understand how SMM companies price, acquire data, and engage with platforms. The first author conducted a sample of ‘mystery shopper interviews’. The 21 companies included: Audiense, Agora Plus, Brand24, Brandwatch, Blinkfire Analytics, BuzzSumo, Digimind, ElixBrand, Emplifi, Exorde Labs, Infegy, Junkipedia, ListenFirst, Meltwater, NewsWhip, Rival IQ, SocialStatus.io, Trendolizer, Tubular Labs, Viewstats, Zeta Global.

This sample included the most prominent companies,[11] as well as a sample of smaller upstarts. Posing as a media analytics startup, the first author requested demos and product calls, using a standardized script while engaging with customer representatives (see Appendix A). While these conversations reflect the vendors' public-facing descriptions, they offer important insight into how these tools present their capabilities and partnerships. Both the email and interview script included questions regarding tool features, as reported in the Repository, data sourcing practices, platform partnerships, pricing, and compliance claims. The lead author took notes during interviews to capture responses and key quotes (calls were not recorded). While mystery shopping is inherently a deceptive research tactic, the authors consulted with a research ethics expert. They determined that this study focuses on powerful entities (not individuals) and most of the non-publicly available information gleaned from the interviews is presented in a de-identified manner. We also reviewed and incorporated public information about each SMM product, including product features and capabilities, social media platform data coverage, special announcements, cost, and licensing information.

The themes from the Repository inform the findings presented in the *Market* and *Pricing* section below, and the themes from the mystery shopper outreach informed the findings in the *Data Acquisition* section.

Findings

The commercial SMM space is large, with SMM companies powering how brands, publishers, researchers, and governments track and understand social media trends. Our analysis identified more than 250 tools that include established SMM companies, small upstarts, or tools on the periphery that allow users to do parts of the SMM process piecemeal. While we identified free and freemium tools, larger and more dynamic SMM tools can cost thousands of dollars per month. Most SMM companies

[11] The biggest players in the SMM space: *Social Media Listening Market Size, Share and Forecast 2034*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.thebusinessresearchcompany.com/report/social-media-listening-global-market-report.

claim to track only public data, and a few enjoy direct access; while scraping and third-party sourcing remain widespread, raising questions about data completeness, accuracy, and transparency.

The Market

Our research uncovered over 250+ tools that are used in some way to understand trends, metrics, and content on social media. We estimate the wider product-verse for SMM tools that includes not only commercial but also free and research-based tools, regional and non-English options, and solutions brands build for internal use stands in the range of hundreds of individual tools worldwide, with countless clients and users. There are two universes of commercial tools: established players and smaller, scrappier startups. The former have existed in the market for decades, tend to have partnerships with social media platforms, and are multi-million dollar enterprises working with prominent clients and worldwide consumer brands. The latter are newcomers to the scene, offering competitive products that focus on niche problems for niche groups and often rely on more opaque methods for gathering their data. Despite the variance in size and maturity, all tools position themselves as indispensable for tracking online conversations and measuring influence.

Our research shows that leading SMM tools generally converge around a common set of core "suite" functionalities and features offered to consumers. As outlined in the Repository under "Features," these include:

- Multi-platform data access and the ability to analyze content performance across social media platforms.
- The ability to show social media engagement metrics & benchmarking, or aggregated insights across likes, comments, shares, and comparative analysis against competitors or peers.
- Tracking of posts, hashtags, accounts, and keywords, often powered by query search and automated alerts.
- The ability to show real-time data and trend detection via live dashboards, alerts, and data visualization for spotting viral content, emerging narratives, or potential risks.
- Network mapping visualizations, showing relationships between accounts, content clusters, and engagement flows.
- AI features such as LLM-generated summaries and sentiment detection.

Sorting by "Type of Tool → Analysis/ Dashboard" and looking at the "Target Users" column in the Repository, almost every SMM company serves brands and is thus pitching tools to monitor reputation, track campaigns, and gauge audience sentiment. Other common target verticals pulled from public company descriptions include news/media and entertainment, influencers, sports, the public sector, education, finance, politics and campaigns, and cybersecurity or digital integrity use cases. The way each product presents its data reflects these audiences, each emphasizing dashboards or reporting

features tailored to the verticals they're courting. The "Adoption" column of the Repository highlights differences between major commercial SMM tooling suites and smaller, emerging tools.

One of the largest players in the market, Brandwatch functions as a full tooling suite, providing solutions for competitive benchmarking, market research, brand management, keyword and post analysis, and historical data review.[12] Brandwatch, like other large commercial SMM products, offers a consulting service, where clients can reach out to their customer care team with questions about the product or strategy. While some tools like Meltwater and Brandwatch excel in monitoring, others like Tubular or Blinkfire focus on specialized areas such as video analytics or sponsorship valuation.

Brandwatch and Meltwater stand out as two of the largest players in the SMM market, underscoring the scale and commercial power of this industry. Brandwatch is reported to generate between $100 million and $200 million annually,[13] serving more than 5,000 clients worldwide.[14] Meltwater reported $439 million in revenue in 2022, [15] with a customer base of over 27,000 corporate clients worldwide.[16] Together, these companies illustrate how SMM platforms have evolved into multi-hundred-million-dollar enterprises with thousands of paying organizations depending on them for visibility into online conversations, and highlight both the size and influence of the commercial monitoring ecosystem.

By contrast, smaller SMM companies appear in the Repository with more niche or emerging adoption. They tend to target specific user groups or offer narrower functionality rather than complete suites, sometimes trading breadth or historical coverage for affordability.

Pricing

Commercial SMM companies often do not post prices publicly; therefore, we relied on information gathered through secret shopper outreach. SMM business models are typically based on subscription services, offering tiered pricing to cater to different market segments and usage needs. The range of tiers varied, with options ranging from free and entry-level packages to enterprise plans that allow unlimited profile tracking and advanced features.

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[12] *Brandwatch | Understand and engage with your customers at the speed of social*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.brandwatch.com/suite/.
[13] *Brandwatch Market Share Analysis for July 2025*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.similarweb.com/company/brandwatch.com/.
[14] *Brandwatch Further Boosts its Deep Audience Analysis & Intelligence Capabilities with Reddit Data | Brandwatch*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.brandwatch.com/press/press-releases/brandwatch-further-boosts-its-deep-audience-analysis-intelligence-capabilities-with-reddit-data.
[15] *NewsWeb*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://newsweb.oslobors.no/message/583890.
[16] *Q4 2021 Presentation*. (2022). Meltwater.

Basic packages were quoted, ranging from freemium tiers to $500/month. Enterprise packages often exceeded $2,000/month. The most exclusive packages quoted ran between $4,500 and as high as $8,000/ month. These packages included API access, custom dashboards, multi-seat licenses, and consulting or customer support. Most vendors structured pricing based on features (real-time alerts, platform coverage), number of users, and data rate limits. Pricing flexibility often depended on the client's negotiation power. Many of the companies we spoke with offered "Data For Good" programs catering to non-profits, journalists, and researchers, offering a version of their product at a steep discount, or even for free.

Data Acquisition

While access to social media data is foundational to any monitoring tool, most vendors remain vague about how they obtain access. Each company we spoke with was explicit in saying they only track public data from major platforms. Public data in this case includes metrics that can be viewed publicly, such as likes, shares, and comments on a post or page set to a 'public' audience. Private or off-feed data is not accessed to ensure compliance with privacy regulations, or unless a client explicitly authenticates with their own operated accounts. The acquisition methods generally fell into two buckets: Direct partnerships and indirect access.

Direct and Paid Partnerships

Of the 21 companies interviewed, 13 disclosed or had publicly posted some form of social media platform partnership. A few of these companies had platform partnerships publicly listed: Brandwatch listed standout partnerships with X, Reddit, LinkedIn, and TikTok, but didn't list Facebook or Instagram.[17] NewsWhip announced its LinkedIn partnership,[18] Meltwater highlighted their partnership with X,[19] and Tubular highlighted a partnership with YouTube.[20] When these public listings appeared, they were often piecemeal and tended to be outdated blog posts or hidden within a company's website. It's unclear if some of the older publicly announced partnerships are still in place. The most

[17] *Partnerships | Brandwatch*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.brandwatch.com/partnerships/.
[18] Nicholson, B. (2023, October 25). *NewsWhip launches beta program with LinkedIn*. https://www.newswhip.com/2023/10/newswhip-launches-beta-program-with-linkedin/.
[19] *Meltwater expands partnership with X, gaining resyndication rights*. (2024, October 10). Meltwater. https://www.meltwater.com/en/about/press-releases/meltwater-expands-partnership-with-x-gaining-resyndication-rights.
[20] Lu, C. (2016, August 11). Tubular and YouTube's Measurement Program. *Tubular Labs*. https://tubularlabs.com/blog/youtubes-new-measurement-program/.

common direct partnerships mentioned during our outreach were with X, Meta (Facebook/Instagram), YouTube, Reddit, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Twitch.

Today, X and Reddit only provide licensed API access to commercial users, and thus any "partnership" is paid.[21] Other social media platforms still offer free API access, though the terms of this free access are inconsistent. In our interviews, customer teams described the varied access they had to free APIs, with many referring to their access as a "marketing partnership," but others described "special" access, implying a sort of alliance with the platforms that goes beyond standard access.

Special bespoke direct data partnerships do exist, but only a few SMM companies seem to leverage exclusive platform access. An example of this alliance is with Meta's Facebook Graph API, which is unpaid and offers endpoints with broader and deeper data access than marketing APIs. However, it is gated and requires direct approval from Meta, especially for some of the more advanced endpoints with higher API rate limits.[22] YouTube and LinkedIn also offer similar special access. The largest SMM companies generally have these special alliances in place, and some referenced these agreements in our interviews. We also identified at least one smaller company that had managed to gain access via a bespoke agreement.

Partnerships generally enhance credibility and functionality but are inconsistently marketed as differentiators. Companies that had these special relationships with social media platforms only occasionally acknowledged them during the interview, and it was rare for a product to *sell* itself based on these special relationships and the level of data they could access. It's ultimately unclear why this was the case, given that this knowledge could have given them a competitive advantage in the market. Some customer success representatives in our interviews alluded to not wanting to annoy or draw the ire of social media platforms.

Indirect Access: Scraping and Third-Party Data

Given such few companies have direct access to data from every major platform, the implication is that most — if not all — SMM companies rely on some level of scraping or third-party data suppliers who themselves have scraped data to augment their datasets. Even at the biggest social monitoring companies, the representatives we interviewed nodded to third-party solutions to source data

[21] Brown, M. A. (2023, March 1). *The Problem with TikTok's New Researcher API is Not TikTok | TechPolicy.Press*. Tech Policy Press. https://techpolicy.press/the-problem-with-tiktoks-new-researcher-api-is-not-tiktok; Kingsley, O. (2024, June 3). *Reddit API: Features, Pricing & Set-ups*. https://apidog.com/blog/reddit-api-guide/.
[22] *Docs>Graph API>Overview*. (n.d.). https://developers.facebook.com/docs/graph-api/overview.

indirectly from social media platforms, or where platform partnerships don't exist, and that augmented what they offered commercially.

In interviews, some companies acknowledged they procure data indirectly rather than directly through platforms. This might be by engaging with data suppliers (which often compile data through scraping), or by utilizing the scraping tools listed in the Repository. For example, two customer success and sales managers were transparent about where TikTok data comes from. One said, "For TikTok, we use third-party data." The third-party wasn't established in this case, but the Repository lists numerous tools, large and small, that can scrape publicly available TikTok data and sell data wholesale. Another commented, "All of our data is through direct access of the social channel APIs, with the exception of TikTok, in which we use a third party to gather that channel's data." TikTok's API is notoriously limited.[23] Another customer success rep said that their data originated "Not with platforms but with other technology companies."

Even with direct access to platform APIs, one rep acknowledged ways to enhance their data. "We're tracking all that's legally allowed based on their [platform's] T&C," the rep explained, then added, "Even when they added more restrictions (on Facebook), we found a way to get more data." Another rep said, "We're ingesting raw data," implying that data scraping was occurring. While companies often claim to follow platform terms of service, their sales and customer success teams frequently hinted in interviews at "augmented" data collection practices that go beyond what official partnerships would allow.

Conclusions

This report highlights a market defined by opacity and imbalance. SMM companies occupy a vast commercial niche, providing numerous sectors and industries with broad visibility into online conversations. Yet the origin of their data is rarely clear. While some vendors maintain formal platform partnerships, most rely on a patchwork of paid API access, bespoke alliances, scraping, and third-party data suppliers — practices that are inconsistently disclosed and tightly guarded. This ecosystem operates under the shadow of shrinking platform access, as APIs become more restricted, more costly, and more selectively granted to a handful of partners.

[23] As Brookings notes, "While the current TikTok API allows some access to data, it is far less robust than previous APIs." *The case for open data access to aid tech regulation*. (n.d.). Brookings. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-case-for-open-data-access-to-aid-tech-regulation/.

The result is a fragmented and uneven system in which platforms retain gatekeeper control, certain SMM companies enjoy privileged access, and many others resort to opaque workarounds to stay competitive. Commercial interests are well-served in this environment, but public-interest researchers face shrinking access and growing disadvantage, precisely when rigorous, transparent research is most needed.

Addressing this imbalance requires enforceable transparency standards for both platforms and SMMs. Policymakers must ensure that the public can reliably understand how social media data is acquired, what its limitations are, and the ethical implications. Without such reforms, the ecosystem will continue to privilege private market interests while leaving the public interest precariously under-supported.

Appendix B: Repository Data Dictionary – Field Definitions

This data dictionary is a reference guide for the Social Media Monitoring Products Repository used in this report. It provides definitions of each field included in the dataset, explaining what information is captured, and notes where that information came from — public materials, company websites, or interviews. The goal is to make the dataset transparent and easy to interpret, so readers understand exactly how each category was defined and can consistently compare tools across the directory. The Repository includes all identified social media monitoring (SMM) tools, along with adjacent products such as data storage or visualization platforms that emphasize working with social media data.

Field Name	Definition / Description	Source / Notes
Company / Tool	Name of the company or digital tool (e.g., platform, software, app).	From public documentation or interviews.
Tool Basics	Brief description of what the tool does and its overall purpose.	Derived from public materials and interviews.
Business Model	How the tool generates revenue (e.g., subscription, freemium, ad-supported, enterprise licensing, licensing fees).	Based on publicly available documentation and interviews.
Status – Maturity	Current stage of development: Active; Emerging; Established; Niche	Based on best public information around company or organization size, usage

		and how long it has been around.[24]
Adoption	Indicators of how widely used the tool is: Defunct; Moderately Used; Niche; Widely Used	Based on best public information around product size, usage.
Type of Tool	Primary tool function category of the product: Analysis/Dashboards; Scraper; Static Dataset; Audio/ Video/ Image Tooling; API; Data Storage/ Warehouse; Text Analysis; Network Mapping/ Data Viz; Search Tool; Enhanced AI Tooling[25]; Social Account Manager; Database; Video/ Image Downloader	From public documentation or interviews.
Features	Key functionalities offered by the product (may be multiple fields): Realtime Data; Enhanced AI Tooling; Data Viz; Data Upload; Video/ Audio Analysis; Image Analysis; Query Search; Scraper; Text Analysis; Static Dataset; API Access; Storage Database; Network Mapping; AI Classifier/ Model; Social Account Manager; Metrics Reporting; Competitive Benchmarking	From public documentation or interviews.
Special Access Requirements	Any non-standard access needs: Free & Open Freemium; Limited Free Use Paid Subscription; Tiered Pricing; Enterprise; Research Access (API-Based)	From published policies or developer notes on product or tool's website.

[24] Some companies publish usage numbers, for example: *Brandwatch Further Boosts its Deep Audience Analysis & Intelligence Capabilities with Reddit Data | Brandwatch*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 26, 2025, from https://www.brandwatch.com/press/press-releases/brandwatch-further-boosts-its-deep-audience-analysis-intelligence-capabilities-with-reddit-data/. When this was not the case, this classification was estimated based on other publicly available indications of maturity.

[25] Enhanced AI tooling may include LMM-based summaries of data or chat-like features to assist users in analysis/search.

Website	Official URL of the tool for reference or further exploration.	Public website.
Use Case Deep Dive	Compelling use cases or scenarios where the tool is applied.	Constructed from public websites and online materials.
Target Users	Who the product serves primarily (e.g., marketers, academics, researchers, developers, enterprise teams).	From public marketing materials, or online blogs.
Platforms Covered	Supported platforms: Facebook; Instagram; YouTube; X; Snapchat; Reddit; LinkedIn; Twitch	From product websites, product specs or public documentation.
Research Program?	Whether there is a formal research program or academic collaboration. (“Yes”/“No”)	Determined via public documentation or direct communications in interviews.
Dashboard?	Indicates if the tool includes a built-in dashboard interface. (“Yes”/“No”)	Verified from product features or interviews.
Static Dataset	Offers downloadable static datasets (e.g., CSV, XLS). (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Visualization Tool?	Provides built-in visualizations like charts or maps. (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Realtime?	Capable of delivering real-time or near real-time data updates. (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Historical Data?	Provides access to historic data coverage stretch back years. (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Scraper?	Utilizes scraping methods to collect its data. (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.

Native Data Collection?	Collects data directly rather than via third-party sources (e.g., tracker or proprietary sensors). (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Key Metrics Covered	List of primary metrics the tool tracks or reports on (e.g., engagement rate, growth, sentiment score).	From public documentation or interviews.
API Integration?	Indicates if the tool supports API-based access or integration. (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Data Storage?	Indicates if the product stores data.	From public documentation or interviews.
Query Search?	Whether the tool allows user queries or search capabilities within the data. (“Yes”/“No”)	From public documentation or interviews.
Pricing Structure?	Pricing model for the tool (e.g., free tier, per-user subscription, enterprise license, one-time fee).	From public documentation or interviews.

Appendix A: Interview Script

Email outreach

Hi there, I represent a stealth startup based in the US, and we're looking for a social monitoring tool to help us understand social media trends and what content is going viral. If possible, I'd like to please use my personal Gmail account, given we're not a public company (X). We're interested in learning more about your tooling for media.

I had a few fast questions, if you don't mind:

- How many platforms does your tool track?
- Is it just public data you track across these platforms, nothing "private" or off-feed?

- What is the scope of data you track on each platform? Say, for Facebook, how many total pages??
- Do you have any direct access to platform API data/ which platforms?

Thank you!

Introduction

Hi there, thank you for taking the time to speak with me today! I represent a stealth startup, and we're in the market for a robust social monitoring tool. I'd love to learn more about your social monitoring tool and its capabilities. Let me know if you'd like me to elaborate on our use case at any point.

Q&A Section

To start, I had a few specific questions about your tool:

1. Platform Coverage
   Could you share how many social media platforms your tool monitors? Are these limited to the major platforms, or do you include niche ones as well?
2. Public Data Scope
   My understanding is that tools like yours generally track public data. Could you confirm that this is the case with your tool? For instance, is it limited to public posts, hashtags, and profiles, or is there additional insight offered? Comment threads?
3. Data Volume and Breadth
   On a platform like Facebook, how comprehensive is your coverage? Are you tracking all public pages globally, or is it more selective based on certain criteria?
4. API Access and Data Integration
   Does your tool integrate directly with official platform APIs? If so, which platforms are supported, and does this allow for any exclusive insights? Do you have direct partnerships with these platforms?
5. Customization
   For specific needs like identifying viral content trends, does your tool offer customizable dashboards or insights tailored to unique metrics or regions?
6. Do you work with media brands?

Closing and Next Steps

Thank you for addressing these! As I mentioned earlier, I'd be using my personal Gmail account to

communicate since we're not publicly launched yet. Please feel free to email me any additional information at my email.

If your tool seems like a good fit for our needs, I'd love to discuss a demo or explore potential next steps.

Thanks again, and I look forward to hearing from you!

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The **Institute for Data, Democracy & Politics** (IDDP) launched in 2019 with the support of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. IDDP's mission is to help society understand critical challenges that arise at the intersection of digital technology, media and democracy, in turn informing sound policy solutions. We are committed to supporting rigorous, evidence-based research that advances democratic values.