



Mindframe
National Media Initiative

SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE ANALYSIS

Media Organisations and Journalists



Background to the study

The Australian Government's *Mindframe* National Media Initiative (*Mindframe*) is funded under the National Suicide Prevention Program. The Hunter Institute of Mental Health (the Institute) has been contracted by the Department of Health and Ageing to manage the *Mindframe* Education and Training program. The program involves building a collaborative relationship with the Australian media and other sectors to encourage responsible, accurate and sensitive media representation of mental illness and suicide.

To date, *Mindframe* has developed and disseminated resources and professional development for the news and entertainment media and for the undergraduate training of journalism and public relations students. The initiative has also developed resources and professional development for sectors that work with the media, such as the mental health and suicide prevention sector, stage and screen, police and courts. All of these sector resources were, however, developed before the rise and influence of social media.

Social media has become the most popular activity for Australians online¹ and many media outlets have entered the space to engage with and influence consumers. Media outlets have typically had a fast uptake of social media, but a generally lower rate of use as an engagement tool.

To better explore the nature and type of social media used by the traditional media, the Institute contracted *Dialogue Consulting* to complete two scoping studies investigating social media use in 2012. This report investigates and analyses the social media use of Australian mainstream media and media professionals. It will be used in conjunction with an additional study investigating the social media use of mental health and suicide prevention organisations in Australia to inform future strategies under the *Mindframe* National Media Initiative.

Section 1: Social media use

1.1 Aims and methods

An analysis of how Australian media organisations and journalists use social media sites in a professional context was conducted. This process initially involved identifying major official media outlets, and then finding relevant journalists by association with these profiles. Data was collected from Facebook or Twitter for each account. Engagement for Twitter was measured using Klout Score² and the number of @replies or ReTweets in the most recent 50 tweets. Engagement in Facebook was measured using the analysis metric 'Talking About This' (TAT)³. Overall, 478 social media presences were analysed. Most major outlets had at least one social media channel. For a breakdown of the outlets with profiles, please see Appendix A. Due to the nature of their content (generally more personal), blogs were excluded from the study.

¹ ACMA (2011), http://acma.gov.au/webwr/assets/main/lib410148/report2-convergent_comms.pdf

² A Klout Score is calculated based on a range of different variables that comprise the Klout formula. Klout does not disclose this formula, making the actual value of the score difficult to quantify. Despite this, Klout remains one of the industry standards for measuring influence on Twitter.

³ 'Talking About This' is a measure of the number of users who have created a 'story' (i.e. post visible to their friends) as a result of interacting with content on a Page, such as sharing an update or commenting on the page. The data is updated daily, providing the number of times the page was talked about in the preceding seven days.

A measure of influence was devised to determine a standardised measure of influence across both Facebook and Twitter, weighting the engagement of the profile against the number of followers or Likes. This measure was used to rank accounts and was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Twitter: } \frac{n(\text{followers}) \times \%(\text{engagement})}{n(\text{tweets})} + \frac{n(\text{followers})}{1000} + \text{KloutScore}$$

$$\text{Facebook: } \frac{n(\text{TAT}) \times 100}{n(\text{Likes})} + \frac{n(\text{Likes})}{1000}$$

The above formulae utilises a combination of the number of followers for each account weighted by the level of engagement users have with the profile. Twitter includes the Klout Score which also considers the influence of user followers (see footnote 2 on previous page).

1.2 Results

As displayed in Figure 1 below, the analysis showed that both media outlets and journalists have a greater presence on Twitter. From the sample investigated, 88 per cent of the professional presences identified were on Twitter, with only 12 per cent on Facebook.

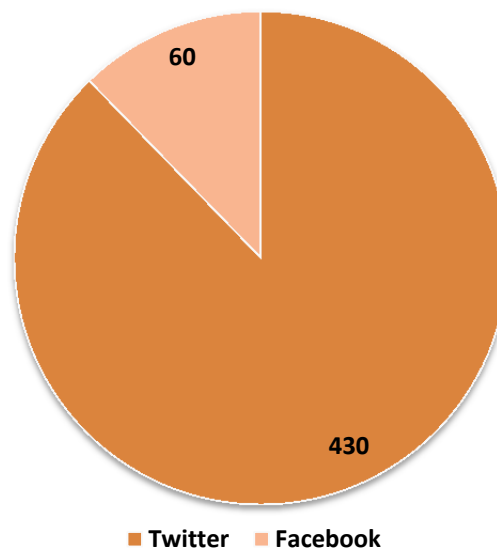


Figure 1. The number of journalists and media outlets on Facebook and Twitter.



The basic statistics for all accounts analysed are reported in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics from all of the social media accounts analysed.

	Likes/Followers	TAT (FB)	Tweets	Engagement (Twitter)	Klout Score
N	473	59	420	420	355
IQR 25%	938	33	774		
Median (IQR 50%)	3,036	315	3,035		
IQR 75%	9,621	1,130	9,037		
Mean				41.72%	51.05
Standard Deviation				28.8%	14
Minimum	1	0	0	0%	10
Maximum	555,397	88,776	135,427	98%	89

Note: TAT: Talking About This (Facebook analytic); Engagement (Twitter): percentage of last 50 tweets that contain @reply or retweet; IQR: interquartile range (first and third quartile of the data)

To further explore the data, journalist profiles were separated from the outlet profiles in a subsequent analysis. Descriptive statistics for each were calculated independently, with the results provided in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2. Journalist social media accounts analysed: overview statistics.

	Likes/Followers	TAT (FB)	Tweets	Engagement (Twitter)	Klout Score
n	330	6	324	324	296
IQR 25%	612	1	580		
Median (IQR 50%)	1,922	16	2,284		
IQR 75%	5,574	315	6,583		
Mean				41.1%	48.9
Standard Deviation				28.8%	13.7
Minimum	1	1	0	0%	11
Maximum	91,912	1,095	135,427	98%	82

Note: TAT: Talking About This (Facebook analytic); Engagement (Twitter): percentage of last 50 tweets that contain @reply or retweet; IQR: interquartile range (first and third quartile of the data)

Table 3. Media outlet social media accounts analysed: overview statistics.

	Likes/Followers	TAT (FB)	Tweets	Engagement (Twitter)	Klout Score
n	143	53	96	96	93
IQR 25%	2,702	86	3,440		
Median (IQR 50%)	7,175	385	8,981		
IQR 75%	22,266	1,276	18,157		
Mean				44.0%	57.9
Standard Deviation				28.8%	12.9
Minimum	36	0	0	0%	10
Maximum	55,5397	84,776	104,214	96%	89

Note: TAT: Talking About This (Facebook analytic); Engagement (Twitter): percentage of last 50 tweets that contain @reply or retweet; IQR: interquartile range (first and third quartile of the data)

In terms of engagement, media outlets were overall the most influential accounts, with 15 out of the top 25 profiles. The ranking for the top 25 profiles is below. More detailed results are available on request.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Triple J (Facebook) | 14. 9 News (Facebook) |
| 2. 60 Minutes (Facebook) | 15. Chris Uhlmann (Twitter) |
| 3. ABC News (Facebook) | 16. Melissa Doyle (Twitter) |
| 4. ABC News (Twitter) | 17. Crikey! (Twitter) |
| 5. Karl Stefanovic (Twitter) | 18. The Age (Twitter) |
| 6. Triple J (Twitter) | 19. Laurie Oakes (Twitter) |
| 7. Channel 7 Sunrise (Twitter) | 20. Michelle Grattan (Twitter) |
| 8. The Project (Twitter) | 21. Sky News Australia (Twitter) |
| 9. Q and A (Twitter) | 22. Leigh Sales (Twitter) |
| 10. ABC Media Watch (Twitter) | 23. David Koch (Twitter) |
| 11. The Australian (Twitter) | 24. Larry Emdur (Twitter) |
| 12. The TODAY Show (Twitter) | 25. Mark Scott (Twitter) |
| 13. Annabel Crabb (Twitter) | |

For a comparison of measures of influence, see also a list of Australian journalists on Twitter, as compiled by Laurel Papworth⁴ using PeerIndex, which is a measure of Twitter influence that is similar to Klout. Note that this list does not include TV journalists, many of whom were ranked highly in the current study.

⁴ <http://laurelpapworth.com/australian-journalists-and-social-media-influence>



1.3 Discussion

For mainstream news outlets and professional journalists, Twitter is the social network of choice. Facebook presences were mostly media outlets who syndicated material via RSS feeds or similar (and had a low level of engagement compared to Twitter engagement, as shown by *Talking About This*) and did not engage meaningfully with users.

Journalists had fewer followers/likes but had higher engagement on Twitter than media outlets. Klout scores were higher in media outlets – likely due to the higher number of followers influencing the score.

The most influential Twitter accounts combined a large number of followers with a high level of engagement (with the exception of syndicated feeds from popular sources such as ABC News). Beside the most popular news outlets, automatically syndicated feeds were less popular and engaged with users far less. This is an indication that users want to be able to not only receive breaking news or current affairs information, but to interact with news sources and journalists about publications or discussions around stories and issues.

Additionally worth noting is that video journalists often source content used within multimedia through YouTube, and will often search for footage or audio content that is relevant to the subject of their stories.

Section 2: Reporting challenges in the digital space

2.1 Introduction

Suicide is a topic of legitimate public interest. National and international research, however, indicates there are potential risks to the community when reporting suicide in certain ways. As such, media codes of practice reinforce the need for media professionals to proceed with caution when considering a report about suicide.

- Reporting suicide and mental illness, a resource for media professionals⁵

In deciding whether to report an individual instance of suicide, consideration should be given to whether at least one of the following criteria is satisfied:

- (a) reporting the death as suicide is clearly in the public interest (see note 2); or*
- (b) clear and informed consent has been provided by appropriate relatives or close friends; or*
- (c) no appropriate authority (such as the police, a school principal or public health authority) has requested that the report be withheld or delayed to avoid a high risk of inducing further suicides.*

- Australian Press Council new interpretations of the reporting guidelines⁶

Information in the online digital space travels extremely fast. Individual working journalists, whether freelancers or staff affiliates, have the ability to communicate directly with their readers through new communication mediums: social networks. Whether accurate or not, information posted to sites such as Facebook and Twitter can travel far beyond the traditional audiences reached by established media channels. Changes in the way information is shared provides both new challenges and opportunities regarding the reporting of suicide and mental illness. These will be explored in this section of the paper.

⁵ http://himh.clients.squiz.net/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/5139/Media-Book-col.pdf

⁶ <http://www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/standard-suicide-reporting/>

New challenges are also presented in the digital space by media consumers and amateur reporters or ‘citizen journalists’. Responsibility for comments posted by consumers to masthead websites and discussion boards ultimately rests with the publisher: it is important for publishers to understand their responsibilities in this area, and to act promptly to deal with comments left by readers in the public domain regarding the reporting of these issues, whether these publications fall under the strict guidelines of “the traditional media” or not.

One significant challenge is that of regulation. This is discussed in the Convergence Review Interim Report⁷, which states:

Whilst technology has eroded the traditional divisions between free-to-air (FTA) television and the internet, newspapers and websites, radio and streaming services, our policy and regulation is still based on the industry and service structures of the early 1990s.

Existing difficulties in determining the role between prescriptive guidelines and enforcement are likely to become more challenging as social media becomes a far greater tool for the media to engage and interact with the wider public, beyond what was previously possible. Indeed, some journalists and media outlets are among the greatest influencers on social media. In providing resources and guidance about reporting suicide and mental illness, *Mindframe* stands in a unique position to encourage good reporting practices across all mediums.

2.2 Case studies

Note: Dialogue Consulting provided details of four case studies from 2012 to illustrate different types of interactions and potential risks. Given that these included real people and details that may be concerning for some audiences, they have been edited in this report. The case studies in their original form will be used by the Mindframe program and its advisory groups to guide discussion.

2.2.1 User-generated suicide discussions brought to mainstream

A summary of key components of the case study:

- An Australian user of social network Reddit posted up a concern about a suicide-related post seen on another network (tumblr) by a young person. The user was requesting assistance identifying and contacting the person in order to ensure she received assistance.
- This was then picked up by wider social networks with Twitter users tweeting details.
- One particular tweet was then ReTweeted by an official media account (a radio station), including a mention of a national youth mental health organisation.
- The young person in question was identified and it was later tweeted that they had been found conscious and taken to hospital by police.

Social media in this case was touted to be the ‘saviour of a young person’. While social media was of huge benefit in this case, it raises several issues:

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http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/convergence_review

- The young person was named and vulnerability was made public, firstly by individuals then by the media who participated in the hunt.
- Once it was determined the young person had received support, the media outlet involved in ReTweeting removed tweets containing the person's name (and suggested others also do so) but these tweets were still available via the media organisation's website.

A question remains as to whether there is a role for media organisations to play in such scenarios? The ability for users to 'feed back' and interact with media organisations is increased through social media, and this has both positive and negative impacts. Users may turn to media organisations or journalists for assistance after reading an article about personal experiences or hearing a news story that resonated with them. What is the media's role in managing the potential for negative engagement after the release of a particular news article?

2.2.2 Non-mainstream outlets reporting suicide

The case study compared two non-mainstream media outlets and their differing approaches to reporting a suicide death.

Media outlet 1, a music news website, reported the suicide death of a well-known singer. Following are some key points related to the coverage:

- The original headline was revised after the publication was criticised for its coverage by other outlets and journalists on Twitter. However, the URL for the story still used the original headline.
- Absent from the coverage was the inclusion of relevant contact details for crisis support services as recommended by the *Mindframe* guidelines⁸.
- A follow-up story on the same website did include a crisis service, but also detailed explicit methods the singer had employed in previous attempts to take his own life.

One contributing factor to details being included in the story may have been the race in online news to break a story first; the website was the first outlet to run with this story. Secondly, it is not a traditional media outlet so training may or may not be provided to staff about reporting of suicide. However, it is still a widely read publication, particularly by young people.

Media outlet 2, a different music news outlet, reported the death of a music writer, a person who is arguably not a celebrity but rather a known figure, to a section of the media. Some key elements of the coverage included:

- The coverage focused on tributes from other writers, and made no mention of the circumstance of the death.
- With no mention of the cause of death or whether police were investigating the cause of death, rumours started by people known to the writer and these circulated on message boards and social networks intimating that he had died by suicide. This speculation eventually found its way to the media outlet's Facebook page.
- A user had left a comment under the story asking whether or not the writer's death was a suicide. It was removed by the site's editor in a timely fashion.

2.2.3 Mainstream outlets reporting suicide, taking reader comments into account

Two different approaches to reader comments on mainstream news sources online were investigated.

- **Online news source 1** reported the suicide of a well-known person. The coverage went to lengths to contextualise the death, talking about the person's history of treatment for mental illness and their history of seeking treatment. The site's editors were also careful to vet the comments and elected only to publish in memoriam tributes, along with relevant contact details for crisis counselling services.
- **Online news source 2** reported on a parliamentary inquiry into suicide. The report included wider reporting of the findings, social circumstances of the communities concerned and the relevant contact details for Lifeline and similar services. The report also detailed methods employed by members of the community who had died by suicide, as these details were deemed relevant to the findings of the report. In this instance, the media organisation elected to not allow comments on the article.

2.3 Emerging recommendations for reporting in the social/digital space

Now that suicides are frequently first reported on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, Press Council chairman Professor Julian Disney said there is a greater need for the mainstream press to provide balanced, responsible reporting of suicide to counteract early speculation.

"The likelihood that people will find out about a suicide through social media is very, very high," Professor Disney said. "This highlights the need for the mainstream media to be engaged in responsible reporting."

- Reports on suicide fit to print⁹

There have long been differing opinions within the mental health fields as to the benefits and risks of increased or decreased reporting on suicide and the effects this can have on vulnerable sections of the community. The Australian Press Council and other peak media bodies have revised recommendations for journalists in recent years.

A key section of the reporting community not directly addressed is the individual working outside media organisations. These individual writers may not even think of themselves strictly as 'journalists', however as they are often key in disseminating information online, they may need to be targeted, especially when the Press Council acknowledges "suicides are frequently first reported on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter."

One of the easiest ways to educate individuals and outlets working in this space may be to contact them directly over Twitter and Facebook and through message boards. This could come from a regulatory body or a partnership between *Mindframe* and peak media bodies. One approach may involve monitoring the digital space, using keyword searches, for instances of reporting and to then contact the individual or publication directly.

Other effective ways to disseminate information via online and social media would be directly contacting key influencers – journalists who are already active in the social/digital space – and asking them to broadcast the links to the relevant guidelines. Such activity may also spark a dialogue around these issues.

⁹ <http://www.theage.com.au/national/reports-on-suicide-fit-to-print-20110801-1i8ar.html>



Appendix A: Outlets Analysed

Outlet	Number of Social Media Profiles	%
60 Minutes	5	1.0
AAP	7	1.4
ABC (general)	27	5.5
ABC national	24	4.9
ABC Online	5	1.0
ABC state & metropolitan	46	9.4
ABC TV	31	6.3
ABC Youth	14	2.9
Channel 10 (general)	3	0.6
Channel 31 (general)	1	0.2
Channel 9 (general)	12	2.4
Crikey!	14	2.9
Fairfax newspapers (general)	40	8.2
Fairfax online	3	0.6
Fairfax radio	18	3.7
Freelance	78	15.9
Metropolitan Newspapers (general)	70	14.3
National Press Club	1	0.2
New Matilda	2	0.4
News Limited	4	0.8
Online	39	8.0
SBS	15	3.1
Sky News	8	1.6
Sunrise	5	1.0
The Morning Show	3	0.6
The Project	2	0.4
The Punch	5	1.0
Today Show	3	0.6
West Australian	2	0.2
WIN	2	0.4
Total	490	100.0