DECODING PUBLICS:
A REVIEW OF DIGITAL MEDIA ANALYTICS TOOLS

MATHIEU O’NEIL & DANIEL KELLEY
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INTRODUCTION

We live in the age of what Castells calls “mass self-communication”. As a result ever-more data about the online communications of people and organisations are being produced, as well as about the spread and impact of these communications. Another consequence is that new software tools are regularly announced as the “next big thing” in online analytics. This report, conducted in October-November 2015, is not meant as the definitive word on the subject, or as a complete snapshot of the state of play. We simply aim to provide an entry-point for those who are considering engaging with online data analytics.

The report contains brief reviews of fifteen digital media software analytics tools. Each tool has been evaluated using the same criteria, four of which were given a numerical score or rating out of 5. The scores are added up at the end of each review, giving a total score out of 20, e.g., 17/20. The primary aim of the review was to evaluate the potential of these tools for teaching and training purposes. Note that a relatively low total score doesn’t rule out their potential: some tools are difficult to learn or use initially, but are extremely powerful. Links to developers’ websites and documentation have been included where possible, along with other links deemed useful for further follow-up. Finally, we have included a review of a book which listed some of the tools analysed, along with exercises. We hope that readers will find this report useful and look forward to their feedback.

Mathieu O’Neil

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REPORT INFORMATION

Conception, editing: Mathieu O’Neil

Software testing, reporting: Daniel Kelley

“Decoding Publics: A Review of Digital Media Analytics Tools” was funded by a grant from the News & Media Research Centre.

Kidney Health Australia is a partner organisation of several University of Canberra research and teaching programs, so relevant search terms were used in some cases.

Please note. Owing to time constraints not all tools were tested in the same way. In particular mobile app tracking tools as used by software developers were not fully tested; however we have elected to keep them in this report as we believe listing their features can still be of use.

The tools are listed under the following categories:

Text Analytics Tools
- Discovertext
- Netlytic
- Twitonomy

Social Networks Analytics Tools
- NodeXL
- Netlytic

Hyperlink Analytics Tools
- Issue Crawler
- VOSON
- Webometrics Analyst

Action Analytics Tools
- Google Analytics
- Hootsuite
- SocialMediaMineR

Mobile Analytics Tools
- Countly
- Mixpanel

Location Analytics Tools
- Followerwonk
- Tweepsmap
SECTION 1:

TEXT ANALYTICS TOOLS
DISCOVERTEXT (TEXT ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: http://discovertext.com/
Video Tutorials: http://discovertext.com/tutorials/
Account login page: https://app.discovertext.com/login.aspx

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

   I. A free 30-day trial account which allows users to evaluate the software and view and test the complete feature set. Trial account includes all enterprise level features (except data export), access to Gnip feeds, and complimentary credits to sample Twitter, Tumblr, Disqus and WordPress data feeds, as well as access to Facebook, the Twitter Search API, and other non-Gnip feeds.

   II. **Educational customers are eligible for discounts.**
       Academic staff and faculty receive a 50% discount on software licenses.
       Students receive 75% off.

   III. Free Basic subscription with limited features.

   IV. Professional subscription for $99/m (academics $49/m, students $24/m).

   V. Enterprise subscription for $3,000/month (academics $1,500/m, students $750/m).

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 3/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

   I. No installation required, it is a cloud based tool, but an online application and sign-up for free 30 day trial required – the sign up process for the free trial seemed unnecessarily complicated and time consuming.

   II. Registered for trial account – received confirmation email 8.5 hours later confirming approval for trial account. Received a second email with links to video tutorials.

   III. Having been approved I then had to register as a new user on their site and enter a licence key that was sent with the approval email – registration required entering details on three different pages.

   IV. After registration, received another email (instantly this time) asking me to click a link and confirm my email. Clicked the link, then had to accept a privacy agreement on the page it took me to. Then clicked another link to go to the login page.

   V. Logging in takes you to your Dashboard with links to all other areas. Instructional videos are available on the Dashboard. Dashboard has a clean interface.

How difficult is it to master the software? Degree of specialised knowledge required?

   I. After logging in I watched two introductory tutorials – “Discovertext explained” and “Collecting Twitter Data”. Both only ran for a couple of minutes.

   II. After watching the Twitter video twice, I set up a test Twitter keyword search using the following keywords: kidney, kidney disease, renal failure, transplant, dialysis – search returned no results.

   III. I tried second search using Twitter user name “Kidney Research UK”. This search produced 154 results in the form of Twitter comments under that user name. These results can then be analysed using a variety of tools on the dashboard.

   IV. It appears a lot of reading will be required to learn how to manipulate the data that is collected from social media feeds, but possibilities are extensive.

What does the software enable researchers to do? What distinguishes it from other software?

I. Has numerous text mining features for all known social media;
II. Can be used by individuals or by collaborative groups spread across multiple locations
III. Is used to capture, filter, clean, search, classify and analyse large quantities of unstructured and structured texts and social media data
IV. Discovertext blog has an excellent article on how it is used by a PhD in his research:
   http://discovertext.com/blog/

5. Presentation of results

What kinds of outputs are generated?

I. I was unable to produce any type of report but Discover text has numerous sample datasets that can be processed within their system for training and familiarisation purposes. You must be logged in to access this sample data.

6. Alternative

Is there an alternative? Why?

The alternativeto.net website lists several possible Windows alternatives to Discovertext:

I. http://alternativeto.net/software/discovertext/?license=commercial&platform=windows
II. http://alternativeto.net/software/discovertext/?platform=windows


How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. In reality I was not really able to perform
II. the type of search and analysis
III. Discovertext is capable of, but I was very impressed by what the product can do. To use effectively, requires a lot of learning.
IV. Several online reviews by other academics who use it laud its abilities, power and potential for all manner of research. See links below.
VI. http://blog.texifter.com/index.php/2014/03/27/discovertext-a-vital-research-tool-for-social-media/


I. Although unable to test it properly, Discovertext appears to have huge potential in the academic field and is heavily discounted for academic staff and students.
NETLYTIC (TEXT ANALYTICS TOOL)

Note: Netlytic is both a Text and Social Networks analytics tool
Website: https://netlytic.org/home/
Login page: https://netlytic.org/
Online Video Tutorials: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNBfatUFOZJzekDsV9oOg3w

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plans</th>
<th>Tier 1 (Free)</th>
<th>Tier 2 (Free)</th>
<th>Tier 3 (Community-supported via web hosting)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max # of Datasets</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max # of Records/Dataset</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>100000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great for exploring what Netlytic can do!</td>
<td>Great for smaller projects and class assignments!</td>
<td>+ Ability to explore your data using Kibana, a popular dashboard powered by Elastic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tier 3 Pricing:

I. 6 mo. Student ($15 per month) $90.00 CAD
II. 12 mo. Student ($9 per month) $108.00 CAD
III. 6 mo. Academic/Not-for-profit ($25 per month) $150.00 CAD
IV. 12 mo. Academic/Not-for-profit ($19 per month) $228.00 CAD
V. 6 mo. Regular ($35 per month) $210.00 CAD
VI. 12 mo. Regular ($29 per month) $348.00 CAD

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 4/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

I. No installation required – Netlytic is an online tool.
II. Site registration required. Tier 1 & 2 accounts are free to use. Site registration and login are done from the same sign in page by clicking the appropriate yellow highlighted text (see image below), which is a bit confusing because it is not obvious. Although the yellow highlighted text has embedded hyperlinks, the mouse cursor doesn’t change to the familiar hand icon when moved over the text to indicate they are active hyperlinks. It is only after clicking on the text that you realise they are actually the active links.
III. Clicking ‘Register’ takes you to the new user registration page. An email address, password and agreement with their terms and conditions are required.
IV. Confirmation of registration automatically returns you to the login page.
V. Logging in takes you to the ‘New Datasets’ page where you can choose from a range of options including links to video tutorials (see image below).

You are using 0/3 of your permitted datasets - Get More
VI. Newly registered accounts are Tier 1. To increase the number of data sets that can be created, users must click ‘Get More’ (see image above) which leads to an ‘Upgrade Request’ page (see image below).

VII. Clicking ‘Fill out form’ (see arrows in image above) opens a request for a Tier 2 account which is also free, clicking ‘Upgrade’ takes you to the Tier 3 purchase page.

How difficult is it to master the software? Degree of specialised knowledge required?

I. To begin with, if data is to be imported from Twitter or Instagram, Netlytic must be authorised to do so using your Twitter and Instagram account credentials first. This is done via links in the ‘My Account’ section and only has to be done once. Facebook, YouTube, RSS, Google Drive do not need authorization within Netlytic.

II. Specialist knowledge is not specifically required, but to really understand how to effectively use and harness the power of Netlytic it is highly recommended that you watch the video tutorials and read the documentation. This may be required more than once and takes some time.

III. However, running a simple data import from Twitter after skimming the basic instructions was simple enough. I searched using #kidney disease and Netlytic returned 186 results in about 30 seconds (see image below).
IV. I found that I had to experiment with the program and run a variety of data imports using Twitter to begin to understand what the program was doing and how to improve what I was doing.

V. To find high value search terms Netlytic recommended that you first perform advanced searches in Twitter to find the best words related to your subject that are being used in Twitter. Again this takes time, but produces datasets of much higher value. Entering search terms into Netlytic in the same format produced by Twitter advanced search also made quite a difference.


What does the software enable researchers to do? What distinguishes it from other software?

I. Website description: Netlytic is a cloud-based text and social networks analyzer that can automatically summarize large volumes of text and discover social networks from online conversations on social media sites such as Twitter, Youtube, blogs, online forums and chats.

II. Netlytic can import and create datasets from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, RSS and Google Drive.

5. Presentation of results

What kinds of outputs are generated?

See sample images below


How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. Netlytic takes a bit of time to properly understand, but a little experimenting and frequent referral to the documentation helps this process. At least no coding is required and the instructions are not confusing.

II. Learning to customize and filter the results also requires some learning but pays dividends in the analyses that are produced.

III. A Tier 2 account would produce some good dataset test results without having to pay any subscription fees, an advantage for students.

7. Summary. Rating: 15/20

I. Well worth the effort learning how to use it as it produces comprehensive datasets and analysis.

Netlytic Sample Dataset Images

I. Preview of imported data – showing first five instances of the 186 found.
II. Keyword Text Analysis and Word Count

Basic Network Map of 186 Twitter search results which can be manipulated and represented in different ways.
III. Full Netlytic Report of the #kidney disease keyword dataset

[Diagram showing analysis of肾病相关的数据集，包括标签云、词频分布等。]
TWITONOMY (TEXT ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website and Login page: http://twitonomy.com/
Tutorials: No documentation seen on the site – all data screens appear to be self-explanatory.

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

   I. Free – limited features to get you started. Most analytics you try ask you to sign up.
   II. $20 one off payment for 1 months access to all premium features – expires at end of one month;
   III. $19/month subscription with access to all premium features – can be cancelled at any time;
   IV. $199 for 1 years access to all premium features (normally $240, currently on special)

Premium features include:

| Dashboard | • Download tweets from users, lists and searches into Excel spreadsheets or PDF documents for backup, sharing, printing or further analysis and actions |
| Profiles | • Zoom in on the time period you’re interested in, set custom date ranges to analyse tweets  
• Download tweets and favourites from any users (not just yours!) to Excel & PDF  
• Save Tweets Analytics into easy to share Excel & PDF documents |
| Mentions & Retweets | • Get more insights on your mentions: Top engaging users, most active days/hours, top hashtags, most retweeted & favorited mentions  
• Speed up your reporting, set custom date ranges to analyse your mentions  
• Backup and share your mentions with ready-to-use PDF analytics reports and Excel files  
• Export your retweeted & favorited tweets into Excel and PDF documents for further analysis and actions  
• Get insights on and download any users’ retweeted & favorited tweets |
| Search analytics | • Get Search Analytics on any keywords, #hashtags or @users  
• Export Search Analytics to easy to print & share Excel spreadsheets and PDF reports |
| Retweets Analytics | • Get insights on how a tweet has been retweeted  
• Export Retweets Analytics to Excel spreadsheets or PDF documents for backup, sharing, printing or further analysis and actions |
| Followers | • Download the list of your (or any other user’s) followers to an Excel spreadsheet  
• With Followers Report, get actionable insights on your followers: Influence, interests, location… |
| Following | • Backup the list of the people you (or any other user) are following to an Excel spreadsheet |
| Lists | • Save tweets from your favourite lists to Excel or PDF documents  
• Export members from any lists to Excel or PDF documents for further analysis and actions |
| Stats tracking | • Track your Twitter stats: Twitonomy records your followers, following & tweets counts for you  
• Daily stats tracking starts as soon as your account is upgraded |

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 5/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

   I. No installation required – it is an online tool which only requires signing in to sign up.
   II. Twitter credentials are used to sign in and Twitonomy asks for authorization to use your Twitter account.
   III. Signing up and in was very simple.

How difficult is it to master the software?

   I. The free account doesn’t offer many options, but I ran the following tests:
II. Ran analysis of a test Twitter account – returns lists for Following, Followers, Favourites. Lists can be expanded for further drill-down, downloaded, printed etc.

III. Individual Following and Follower users can be analysed as per previous point.

IV. Any Twitter user who appears in any list can be analysed.

V. Run Tweets analysis – returns Tweet history, Users most retweeted, Users most replied to, Users most mentioned, Hashtags most used, Days of the week, Hours of the day, Platforms most tweeted from. Charts and lists have download links.

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

I. Twitonomy appears very easy to use. No complex documentation to read first, all menus are simple and intuitive, the way results are returned is easy to understand. I was able to start analysing and running tests immediately without any problem.

4. Possibilities, uniqueness. Rating 5/5

What does the software enable researchers to do?

Description of features from the website:

I. Get detailed and visual analytics on anyone’s tweets, retweets, replies, mentions, hashtags

II. Browse, search, filter and get insights on the people you follow and those who follow you

III. Backup/export tweets, retweets, mentions and reports to Excel & PDF in just one click

IV. Monitor your interactions with other Twitter users: mentions, retweets, favourite

V. Get and export Search Analytics on any keywords, #hashtags, URL or @users

VI. Get insights on and download any user’s retweeted & favorited tweets

VII. Browse, search, filter, sort and batch add/remove people to your lists

VIII. Monitor tweets from your favourite users, lists and keyword searches

IX. Get actionable insights on your followers with Followers Report

X. Find out easily those you follow but don’t follow you back

XI. Download your followers and following lists to Excel

XII. Get the list of the followers you don’t follow back

XIII. Track clicks on the links in your tweets

XIV. Track your follower growth over time

XV. And much more

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. Ease of use.

II. Easy to understand.

III. Wide range of easy-to-understand results.

5. Presentation of results

What kinds of outputs are generated?

See sample images below

6. Alternative

Is there a better alternative? Why?
I. Tweepsmap – has some similar and different features, performs mapping, possibly more complex and scalable to enterprise use, more focused on Followers.

II. The alternativeto.net website list several possible alternatives to Twitonomy:
http://alternativeto.net/software/twitonomy/

7. Personal impressions. Rating: 5/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. Unlike some of the other tools tested, Twitonomy was easy and non-confusing to use. Its menus are easy to follow and the analysis tools are obvious and easy to start. Analysis results are not difficult to interpret.

II. However, just how many results are returned will be determined by your level of Followers/Following.

III. Twitonomy allows you to analyse any Twitter user that appears in analysis lists.

IV. Depending on the number of Following/Followers, the time taken to perform different types of analysis can take some time.

V. Opinions of other users can be seen on the website listed below:
https://www.g2crowd.com/products/twitonomy/reviews

I. An enjoyable product to use, easy to get started, continue with and understand.

Twitonomy Sample Dataset Images
Twitonomy Sample Dataset Images
SECTION 2:
SOCIAL NETWORKS ANALYTICS TOOLS
NODEXL (SOCIAL NETWORKS ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: [http://nodexl.codeplex.com/](http://nodexl.codeplex.com/)
NodeXL Background Info: [http://www.slideshare.net/Marc_A_Smith/2013-nodexl-social-media-network-analysis](http://www.slideshare.net/Marc_A_Smith/2013-nodexl-social-media-network-analysis)

1. Cost

   What kinds of subscription are offered?

   I. Basic version: Free  
   II. Donation  
   III. Pro version: Due for released late September 2015 – no pricing available.

**Review Update 15-Oct-2015:** When this product was first reviewed the Pro version had not been released. Today I opened NodeXL Basic on my computer to experiment with importing .csv data files from VOSON and Netlytic. It immediately opened a dialogue box, downloaded an update then asked me to insert my NodeXL Pro licence. As I didn’t have a licence, it directed me via a link to the NodeXL website where I could buy a Pro licence, prices for which are now listed below. Although their homepage still says it is to be released in late September 2015, 12 month licenses for NodeXL Pro are now available via an automatic upgrade process through existing Basic versions. Unfortunately, each time I tried to close the “upgrade to pro” dialogue box, XL crashed and automatically restarted, downloaded the update again, and asked me to buy a licence again. I repeated this several times with exactly the same result, and essentially my Basic version is now unusable.

   - Corporate - $749.00 USD / year  
   - Academic, non-profit, and personal - $199.00 USD / year  
   - Student - $29.00 USD / year

**Comparison between NodeXL Basic and NodeXL Pro**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NodeXL Basic</th>
<th>NodeXL Pro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manually enter network edges</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualize network graphs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build one-click network summary reports</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import from Twitter Limited API</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import from Twitter Full API</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import from Facebook fan pages and groups</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import from GraphML</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export to GraphML</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced network metrics (centrality)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentiment and content analysis</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Ease of Installation. Rating: 5/5

User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

I. Download and installation was simple and fast and the whole process took about 45 seconds. Minimum technical knowledge required.
II. The NodeXL Template must be opened from the Start Program Menu (Windows) and is listed as NodeXL Template.

3. Complexity. Rating: 1/5

How difficult is it to master the software and is specialised knowledge required? High

I. The developers claim that NodeXL is easier to use than other similar software because no coding is required, but it appears a sound understanding of social network analysis terminology and analysis is required in order to use the software for its intended purpose. Numerous custom graphs can be downloaded to use with your own datasets.

II. Many and various tutorials are available online from the developer’s website. An IT101 assignment for students who have never been exposed to network analysis before is available and students can complete it with some training in approximately 1-3 hours.

III. An advanced visualization, analysis, and interpretation assignment available for NodeXL students takes several weeks.

IV. The following link leads to an online review containing video tutorials of NodeXL:
http://thoughttark.net/making-social-network-analysis-accessible-a-review-of-nodexl/


What does the software enable researchers to do?

I. While claiming to perform a complex range of functions, the authors emphasise that researches do not need to know any type of coding to use NodeXL.

II. Description from Website: NodeXL Basic is a free, open-source template for Microsoft® Excel® 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2016 that makes it easy to display, explore and analyse network graphs created from edge and vertex lists stored in an Excel workbook. With NodeXL, you can enter a network edge list in a worksheet, click a button and see your graph, all in the familiar environment of the Excel window.

III. NodeXL Pro was released in late September 2015 and offers additional features that extend NodeXL Basic, providing easy access to social media network data streams, advanced network metrics, and text and sentiment analysis, and powerful report generation. NodeXL Pro can create insights into social media streams with just a few clicks.

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. It uses the familiar context of Excel but many complex formulas and algorithms have been programmed behind the scenes.

5. Presentation of results

What kinds of outputs are generated?

I. NodeXL is capable of producing simple to extremely complex network graphs and maps from a wide range of data sources.

See sample images below

Numerous detailed examples are available on the developers website:
http://www.nodexlgraphgallery.org/Pages/Default.aspx
6. Alternative
Is there a better alternative? Why?

I. Difficult to answer – can be used with other tools such as VOSON and .csv files from other tools can be imported into NodeXL.
II. Has similar and different features to Netlytic, but seems more complicated to understand and use than Netlytic (contrary to what the developers say).

7. Personal impressions: Rating: 4/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. It obviously has powerful features which tap into the mathematical functions embedded in Excel, but without the basic knowledge of what social network mapping and analysis is all about and spending time learning how to use the program, a steep learning curve is required.

I. It is somewhat difficult and complicated to understand their terminology, but produces outstanding network maps once mastered. Developers need to create an easy to read and understood instruction manual. Educational learning materials are available.

NodeXL Sample Dataset Images
NETLYTIC (SOCIAL NETWORKS ANALYTICS TOOL)

Netlytic was included in both the Text and Social Networks Analytics Sections. Netlytics performs both functions as described by the developers below:

**Website description:** Netlytic is a cloud-based text and social networks analyzer that can automatically summarize large volumes of text and discover social networks from online conversations on social media sites such as Twitter, Youtube, blogs, online forums and chats.

Netlytic can import and create datasets from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, RSS and Google Drive.
SECTION 3:

HYPERLINK ANALYTICS TOOLS
ISSUE CRAWLER (HYPERLINK ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website and Login page: https://www.issuecrawler.net/
Tutorials: http://www.govcom.org/Issuecrawler_instructions.html
Scenarios of use: http://www.govcom.org/scenarios_use.html
FAQs: https://wiki.issuemariaulator.net/bin/view/Issuecrawler/FAQ
Issue Crawler Back-End Movie - a demonstration of how the Issue Crawler works: https://movies.issuemariaulator.net/

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?
   I. Free – the site is run and operated by Govcom.org, an Amsterdam-based foundation dedicated to creating and hosting political tools on the Web. Much of the work involves mapping issue networks on the Web, using the Issue Crawler software.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 4/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?
   I. No installation required – it is an online tool.
   II. Registration is required – confirmation email of account set up and initial access password was sent, then follow up email was sent confirming account approval. Account cannot be accessed until this approval is granted. Approval email arrived the 45 mins later.
   III. Logged in with the supplied password then changed the password upon login in the space provided – this was very simple.

   III. Site registration was straightforward, but before using the site, it must be noted that:
   Windows / Internet Explorer Users: Download the svg viewer plug-in at http://www.adobe.com/svg. No plug-in is necessary for Firefox, Safari or Chrome users.

How difficult is to master the software?
   I. The user instructions, while long and detailed, are not overly complicated and are easy to read, follow and understand.

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

   I. Specialist knowledge should not be required so long as one is prepared to read through and refer frequently to the instructions and follow them. After a number of uses it should become familiar and reasonably easy to use. There are three primary types of crawls that can be run with a variety of options. Initial testing would be required to determine the best type of crawl for a particular situation. One useful set of instructions is devoted to explaining various scenarios at http://www.govcom.org/scenarios_use.html

   II. To run a test crawl I logged in, added several URLs in the space provided, pressed Harvest, left the crawl type and default settings selected as they were and pressed ‘Crawl’. I had the choice of having the results emailed to the nominated email address which I selected.

   III. Crawls can take up to 8 hrs, depending on their complexity, but their progress can be viewed in an area called the Lobby which is accessed via the main Menu.
IV. I received an email from Issue Crawler approximately three hours after commencing my test crawl saying it had completed successfully.

V. However, my first crawl produced no results.

4. Possibilities, uniqueness. 5/5

What does the software enable researchers to do?

I. Issue Crawler does exactly what its name implies. It crawls URLs starting with some seed sites, looking for other sites related to particular issues. The scenarios link gives detailed examples:

www.govcom.org/scenarios_use.html

II. Network maps provide indications about which organizations are in a network (NGOs, media, governments, inter-governmental organizations, donors, corporations, scientific establishments, individuals, etc.). Maps may also provide indications of an organization’s overall centrality in the network, and/or the cluster it finds itself in.

III. Issue networks show organizations around a particular issue, and therein lies the original purpose of the software. Who’s propagating ‘conflict timber’? Who’s discussing ‘anti/pro gun control’ or ‘communication rights’? What’s the network around an issue at this time? Besides organizations, the network may have key documents, events, products, tools, slogans and more that bind it, or particular clusters in the network. You may explore these commonalities once you have located a network.

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. Description from website: The IssueCrawler is web network location and visualization software. It consists of crawlers, analysis engines and visualisation modules. It is server-side software that crawls specified sites and captures the outlinks from the specified sites. Sites may be crawled and analyzed in three ways: co-link, snowball and inter-actor.

5. Presentation of results

What kinds of outputs are generated?

I. Co-link analysis crawls the seed URLs and retains the pages that receive at least two links from the seeds. Snowball analysis crawls sites and retains pages receiving at least one link from the seeds. Inter-actor analysis crawls the seed URLs and retains inter-linking between the seeds. The Issue Crawler visualises the results in circle, cluster and geographical maps.

See sample images below

6. Personal impressions. 3/5

How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. The site appears very basic, but it is all about functionality, not looks. Good, easy to read documentation and examples are provided and it was easy to get started after some reading.

II. After running two different types of test, found the site to be temperamental. Was unable to view results.
Section 3: Hyperlink Analytics Tools

7. Summary. Rating: 16/20
   Appears to be a very useful, fairly user friendly tool. However, I had difficulties producing datasets using the online tools provided as the site seemed to be having issues and would not generate datasets from the results it had gathered. I went back to the site several times over a couple of days with the same result.

   (Note. The site was easy to use, but the first test results returned were minimal and could not be produced, whilst the second test results could not be accessed.)

Issue Crawler Sample Test Result Images

Screenshot of Co-link Analysis

![Screenshot](attachment:image.png)

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Note: The 5 x URLs used for the test issue crawl were all rich with multiple links within their pages, but the test results that came back were very poor. The list of blue text in the above image are links to different types of test data, but they either did not open, or if they did open, I received a message that the data was lost.

The map links above were also disappointing. The first two didn’t work, and the third map was supposedly sent to my email address, but nothing turned up.

Wondering if the URLs I used were responsible for the poor results, I ran a second test nominating a Snowball analysis crawl. Received notification approximately 9 hours later that crawl had finished. This crawl came back with results, but I was unable to view any of the results as the site appeared to be having problems.
VOSON (HYPERLINK ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: https://voson.uberlink.com/
Note: VOSON does not work with Internet Explorer – Use only the web browsers indicated by icons on the subscription plans below. Seems to work best in Google Chrome.
Documentation and User Guides: http://uberlink.com/software#voson

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

VOSON Monthly Subscriptions

VOSON Annual Subscriptions
Section 3: Hyperlink Analytics Tools

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 4/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

I. No installation required – VOSON is an online tool.
II. Account application was problematic, but it appeared that there were problems with the website. I was unable to access the uberlink website at all on Thursday 1 Oct. but was able to access it the next day. On various occasions when I came back to the site I had random difficulties accessing it.
III. New users must register for a VOSON account which has to go through an approval process. Personal information that has to be provided includes name, email (preferably institutional address, not generic, eg., gmail), country, occupation, sector, field and place of work, plus clear reasons about why and how you plan to use VOSON.
IV. An acknowledgement email is sent to your nominated address, and if approved, you receive another email within 48hrs. No email equals no approval.
V. I recommend reading the instructions at the top of the registration page before applying.

How difficult is to master the software?

I. Once logged into VOSON online the interface you are presented with is not overly intuitive. It is recommended that you read the documentation first. However, the documentation is not on the VOSON database site, instead you are directed to uberlink.com. Once there it is difficult to find as there is no direct link to a Help page off the Uberlink menu. You need to go to Services/VOSON/Software to get to the documentation: http://uberlink.com/software#vosen

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

I. Specialist knowledge is probably not required, but a minimal amount of computer skills are recommended. There are several help documents, all of considerable length.
II. Once you understand how to start a database, it is a matter of frequently referencing the help files to undertake your first crawl and analysis.
III. There are a variety of ways to process and analyse the crawl results, and again, reference to the help files is strongly advised.
IV. Users with coding skills are able to customise VOSON and detailed instructions are provided for this.

What does the software enable researchers to do?

I. Website description: The VOSON System is web-based software incorporating web mining, data visualisation, and traditional empirical social science methods (e.g. social network analysis, SNA). Web services facilitate access and sharing of distributed resources such as datasets, methods and computational cycles.

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. There are other tools that seem similar, but VOSON appears to be able to mine large collections of URLs, can produce subset databases off a parent data base and is very customisable. Each database can generate a variety a network maps that can be manipulated via a range of settings.
II. It also works with NodeXL, a function that requires high level computer skills.
5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?

See sample images below

I. Database view
II. A variety of customisable network maps generated from URLs in databases
III. URLs by region or country
IV. Text analysis
V. A variety of other forms of analysis that are detailed in the documentation.

6. Alternative
Is there a better alternative? Why?

I. Of the similar tools reviewed, VOSON appears the most powerful and versatile.
II. Netlytic and Tweepmsmap similar but different.

7. Personal impressions. Rating: 5/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. At first VOSON is confusing as you try to understand it and has a steep learning curve. I had to frequently refer to the help files, but its scalability, the maps and results it is capable of returning are very impressive.
II. The network maps are interactive, customisable and can be manipulated in a variety of ways.

A powerful tool, it rewards the user with very comprehensive and impressive data and analysis, but patience will be required to learn how to use it and master its potential.

VOSON Sample Dataset Images

The following images are different outputs from the same URL Database. Each of these maps can also be rendered in a variety of different ways depending on the options chosen.

Minimum Spanning Tree Analysis Map
Section 3: Hyperlink Analytics Tools

Complete Network Analysis Map

Hierarchy Analysis Map

Back ⇩
WEBOMETRICS ANALYST (HYPERLINK ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: http://lexiurl.wlv.ac.uk/
Teaching resources: http://webometrics.wlv.ac.uk/, http://linkanalysis.wlv.ac.uk/
Online Documentation: http://lexiurl.wlv.ac.uk/searcher/index.html

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

   I. Free downloadable app that requires a Windows Azure Marketplace Account Key to run.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 1/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

Downloading the free .exe file is simple and straight forward and does not require installation – it simply runs an application when double clicked. However a number of steps are required before the app can be downloaded or used which is time consuming and a little confusing.

   I. Go to Webometric Analyst Download page;
   II. Complete online registration and submit;
   III. Download link is provided to download the .exe file;
   IV. To use the app a Windows Azure Marketplace Account Key is required;
   V. To get such a key one needs a Microsoft account which means signing up for one if you don’t;
   VI. Using your Microsoft account log into Windows Azure Marketplace to get a key;
   VII. Test the key in a special link provided by Webometrics to see if it works – if it doesn’t you need to get a different key;
   VIII. If it works, the app can now be used. Run the app and paste the key into the app where specified;
   IX. Every time you run the Webotronic Analyst app the key has to be repasted in so the key must be saved and stored in a secure location on your computer.

3. Complexity. Rating: 1/5
How difficult is it to master the software? High.

   I. The app can be used using a wizard type interface or a tabbed classic (see screen shots a bottom of page). The wizard interface appears simple and is easy to use to perform a basic search – what to do after that is not so easy to work out.
   II. The classic interface appears complicated and daunting. Each tab allows users to perform a different search type function but instructions need to be read and understood to use them.

Degree of specialised knowledge required? High.

   I. While the wizard interface appears simple to use on the surface and comes with easy to follow instructions to get you started, like the classic interface, it requires reading a lot of other instructions to understand what it does and what to do with the information it retrieves.
   II. I performed one Link Network Diagram search which returned minimal results, then tried to perform a Web Impact Report using keywords. When this search was executed the program reported I had run out of points and would need to get a new key. This was odd as the instructions claim you can do about 5000 searches on one key.
What does the software enable researchers to do?

1. **Description from the website**: Webometric Analyst analyses the web impact of documents or web sites and creates network diagrams of collections of web sites, as well as creating networks and time series analysis of social web sites (e.g., YouTube, Twitter) and some specialist web sites (e.g., Google Books, Mendeley). It automatically submits queries to search engines and other sites and process the results.

What distinguishes it from other software?

5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?

1. When starting a new search the app asks if it can create a new folder on the hard drive in which to save the search results. It then generates a variety of text files that contain search results and html files with other information.

   See sample images of Wizard and Classic user interfaces below

6. Personal impressions. Rating: 1/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

1. In a word, confusing, complicated with a steep learning curve. Having to paste the key in every time the app was run was annoying.

1. Seemed to have potential, but setup was overly complicated and product was frustrating to use.

Webometrics Analyst Sample Images

The Wizard interface

![Wizard Interface Image](image-url)
The Classic interface

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GOOGLE ANALYTICS (ACTION ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: http://www.google.com/analytics/
Online Q & A re Google Analytics: https://support.google.com/analytics/#topic=3544906
Sign up page: https://www.google.com/analytics/web/provision?et=authuser#provision/SignUp/

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?
   I. Free accounts for small business.
   II. Premium (paid) accounts for larger to enterprise sized businesses – prices on application.
   III. Google account required to sign up for either type of account.
   IV. Google Analytics can be used for URL and mobile app tracking.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 3/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?
   I. For website tracking, no installation is required, but knowledge about how to add code to webpages or
      access to a website builder/designer to add code on your behalf is required.
      People using mobile app tracking will need to be involved in app design/programming.
   II. When signing up you are first asked if you want to track a website or a mobile app.
      As either a URL or mobile app is required to sign up I did not complete the sign up process.
   III. The questions asked at sign up give insight into how the process works and are listed below.

New Account Signup
What would you like to track?
   • Website
   • Mobile App

Tracking Method
This property works using Universal Analytics. Click Get Tracking ID and implement the Universal
Analytics tracking code snippet to complete your set up.

Setting up your account
Account Name - Accounts are the top-most level of organization and contain one or more tracking IDs.

Setting up your property
   • Website Name?
   • Website URL?
   • Mobile App Name?
   • Industry Category?
   • Reporting Time Zone?

Data Sharing Settings
Data you collect, process, and store using Google Analytics (“Google Analytics data”) is secure and
kept confidential. This data is used to provide and maintain the Google Analytics service, to perform
system critical operations, and in rare exceptions for legal reasons as described in our privacy policy.
The data sharing options below give you more control over sharing your Google Analytics data.
How difficult is to master the software?

I. After signing up, you are given a tracking ID for your website or the mobile app.
II. Setting up website tracking requires technical knowledge about how to add code to webpages (and there are several options for this) or you require the services of a web coder to do it on your behalf.
III. Setting up Mobile App Analytics requires technical knowledge of your app development environment.
IV. Google provides extensive instructions on how to set up both types of tracking. While they are quite clear, they still require a degree of specialist knowledge just to understand what they are talking about. (Website tracking, Mobile app tracking).

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

I. The link Learn more in the sign up questions above takes you to a page explaining your data tracking sharing options. The theme on this page (which contains a lot of information) is that you really need the assistance of Google analytics specialists to help you analyse your data.
II. The small business account may be free, but it appears Google makes its money by providing analytics and marketing services/advice/strategies that capitalise on the data produced by their analytics.
III. That said, I also looked at a number of professional reviews as I was unable to physically test the product, and overall Google analytics receives quite high praise for what it does and in business terms the investment in their services pays dividends if their advice and strategies are followed.

What does the software enable researchers to do?

The list of what Google Analytics does is quite extensive and is detailed across many pages. For full details, see the Analytics Help Centre. A brief summary is below:

I. Monitor account health and performance.
   The articles in the Monitor topic help you understand the features of Google Analytics that let you keep tabs on the overall health and performance of your accounts and properties.
II. Audience reports.
   The articles in this section explain how to investigate the composition and behaviour of your audience, and how to configure and implement additional audience-related features.
III. Advertising reports.
   Google Analytics offers many features and reports that can help you analyse, understand, and improve your online advertising efforts.
IV. Acquisition reports.
   The Acquisition reports provide a window on your users’ Acquisition-Behaviour-Conversion (ABC) cycle: how you acquire users, their behaviour on your site after acquisition, and their conversion patterns.
V. Behaviour reports.
   Analyse site speed, site search, event tracking, Adsense, ad exchange, behaviour flow, content grouping, experiments, in-page analytics, tips.
VI. Conversion reports.
   In Analytics, a conversion is the completion of an activity that is important to the success of your business, such as a completed sign up for your email newsletter (a Goal conversion) or a purchase (a Transaction, sometimes called an Ecommerce conversion). Once you’ve set up Goals and/or
Ecommerce tracking, you can use the Multi-Channel Funnels reports to see how all your channels worked together to create sales.

VII. Mobile App reports.
Mobile App Analytics lets you collect data from your mobile apps and integrates it with your Google Analytics account, where you can reapply your knowledge of web analytics to dedicated app reports. Learn how to set up Mobile App Analytics. The suite of Mobile App Reports provides the tools you need to analyse and evaluate your app performance.

What distinguishes it from other software?

1. There are numerous other web analytics packages available, but simply because of its size and omnipresence on the web, Google is the most well-known web analysis product. Many of the other products perform similar functions to Google, but for sheer scope and scalability, Google is in the top tier. If you watch the status bar in the bottom left corner of your web browser while it is trying to open a new webpage or website, you will see by the urls that are displayed there that many websites are now linked to multiple tracking and/or analytics services. (Depending on which web browser you use, you may have to go to View/Toolbars/Status bar to activate it.)

5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?

1. Google Analytics produces many and varied reports.

See sample images below

6. Alternative
Is there a better alternative? Why?

1. There are many other companies with similar products, such as the three listed below:
   a. Coremetrics, now owned by and called IBM Digital Analytics
   b. Adobe’s Omniture SiteCatalyst
   c. WebTrends Analytics – used by Microsoft

II. Extensive research would be required to say which is better, but as with all such products, the real question is “Which product best meets the requirements of what we wish to analyse and achieve”.

7. Personal impressions. Rating: 5/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

1. I was unable to perform real tests with this product as explained above, but numerous reviews give it very good ratings. The list of enterprise businesses who use it is extensive.

II. What I would question as a user is the claim that it is easy to use. This appears to be a subjective claim. It may be easy to begin with basic web analytics which most search engines provide freely anyway, but to undertake meaningful analysis and be able to act upon it is another thing entirely - which is why Google encourages users to rely on its teams of specialists to help you make the most of it.

If you are willing to pay the specialists, by all appearances it is an outstanding tool.
Google Analytics Sample Images
HOOTSUITE (ACTION ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: https://hootsuite.com/
Account login page: https://hootsuite.com/login

1. Cost
   I. Basic – Free
   II. Pro – from AU$10.99/month or AU$131.88/year depending on features selected, and supports up to 50 social networks.
   III. Enterprise – price upon application.
      See features list below

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 4/5
   User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?
   I. Web based app, no installation required.
   II. During the free account setup process users can add Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin and Google+ feeds.
      See Account Setup screen below
   III. Login credentials for each linked account have to be supplied during setup so that Hootsuite can access the accounts.
   IV. Hootsuite does require full access to account profiles etc. and permission must be given for this access and to allow Hootsuite to make posts from those accounts as each account is added.
   V. Once you have finished adding your social network sites you are taken to your dashboard and a tour of how it all works.
      See Streams Setup page below
   VI. The Hootsuite blog gives quite clear instructions about how to set Hootsuite up. This site also has very clear instructions on how to set up and use Hootsuite.

3. Complexity Rating: 4/5
   How difficult is to master the software?
   I. The screen prompts that are presented once the account is set up are a little confusing but Hootsuite does its best to walk you through the process as painlessly as possible. Reading the blog instructions as you set it up helps.

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

   I. Experience in using complicated software may be an advantage, but the user interface is highly customisable and it is easy to play around and experiment with. At least a knowledge of coding is not required, and a few hours of experimenting and playing with it should provide a good basic feel for it.
   II. Hootsuite can be used as a basic ‘all in one place’ social media manager, but tapping into the full suite of options, power and capabilities is a very different story. Hootsuite has what it calls Podium, a professional training resource for social media education. You can enrol in a range of free Social Media Marketing courses, or enrol in Hootsuite University, and for $21 per month learn skills and best practices
that will help you excel with Hootsuite and provide you with Hootsuite certification at the end. A third paid option provides other social media training and certification.

What does the software enable researchers to do?

I. Hootsuite has numerous webpages describing all the things it can do, but in the simplest terms, it brings all your social networking apps together in one place. Hootsuite allows you to use and manage each app from one place.

II. In complex terms, it is an all-in-one, highly scalable platform that provides social media management, social marketing, social selling, and social customer service.

III. Hootsuite can incorporate analytics from Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Analytics and its own Ow.ly shortened URL metrics.

IV. Hootsuite is designed for use by teams (for bigger organizations or agencies with several staff members assigned to manage social network accounts). Helpful for bigger organisations, but unnecessary for one or two people.

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. The fact it integrates numerous social media apps and platforms into one place and facilitates multiple ways to use and manage them in that space.

II. It provides very good documentation and a full education program about social media.

III. It provides numerous case studies which can be downloaded on application.

IV. Hootsuite can import profiles of Twitter users and Google+ Circles.

5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?


6. Alternative
Is there a better alternative? Why?

I. There is a similar program called Nimble but reviews suggest it is nowhere near as powerful as Hootsuite.

7. Personal impressions. Rating: 5/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. I set up an account, which was simple enough, and had a brief play with the Dashboard interface. While a lot more time would be required to master all its powerful features, I was able to in a short time see my Twitter and Google+ feeds, add Tabs and other features from the dashboard menu.

II. I was very impressed by the extensive Help instructions and the fact that they provide holistic education, training, solutions and packages for all manner of social media.

Appears to be an excellent program for basic users through to education and enterprise users and researchers, but training is required to fully utilise its power.

**Hootsuite Features List**

![Hootsuite Features List](image)

**Hootsuite Account Setup Screen**

![Hootsuite Account Setup Screen](image)

**Hootsuite Streams Setup Screen**

![Hootsuite Streams Setup Screen](image)
SOCIALMEDIAMINER (ACTION ANALYTICS TOOL)

Parent Website: https://www.r-project.org/
Australian download site (CSIRO) for "R": http://cran.csiro.au/
SocialMediaMiner download page: https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/SocialMediaMineR/

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?
Free to download and use, but no warranties or guarantees given. Knowledge of coding required.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 2/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

   I. A software application called “R” must first be downloaded and installed as it provides the framework for a range of tools to operate in, including SocialMediaMiner. Downloading and installing “R” was reasonably straightforward, but some documentation needs to be read first to determine what version of “R” is required and where to download it from.

   II. Downloading and installing SocialMediaMiner was a little more convoluted, but not difficult. Reading the documentation is necessary as there are a few options as to how to do it. I chose to download the SocialMediaMiner.zip file and import into the “R” application via its Packages menu option which worked OK – simply accept the default options that are offered during installation. You also need to note where it deposits the working files which should be in the local User account of the person installing the software.

   III. Reading the documentation and installation took approximately 1 hr.

How difficult is it to master the software?

   I. Installation was OK, but after that the fun started. I downloaded the SocialMediaMiner Manual and read through it, which isn’t hard as it gives a similar set of instructions for each function. (see list below).

   Topics documented in SocialMediaMiner Manual:
   get_facebook
   get_linkedin
   get_pinterest
   get_reddit
   get_socialmedia
   get_stumbleupon
   get_twitter
   get_url
   SocialMediaMiner

   However, without programming knowledge, what to do exactly is a little obscure as the instructions are really written for people familiar with programming speak. Hoping to map Kidney Health (@KidneyHealth) on Twitter, I followed the instructions, loaded the SocialMediaMiner package in “R”, but no matter how often I did this all I received was an error message saying it couldn’t load SocialMediaMiner:

   > local({pkg <- select.list(sort(names(packages(all.available = TRUE)), graphics=TRUE)
   + if(nchar(pkg)) library(pkg, character.only=TRUE))})
   Error in loadNamespace(i, c(lib.loc, .libPaths()), versionCheck = vI[[i]]) :
   there is no package called ‘RCurl’
   Error: package or namespace load failed for ‘SocialMediaMiner’

   >

   >

   >
I also tried to run the get_twitter without loading the SocialMediaMineR package but this too only produced error messages as per below:

> get_twitter("http://www.cnn.com")
Error: could not find function "get_twitter"
> get_twitter
Error: object ‘get_twitter’ not found
> get_twitter("https://twitter.com/KidneyHealth")
Error: could not find function "get_twitter”

To rule out possible faulty installation issues I uninstalled then reinstalled the package but the results were the same. I did wonder if trying to run it on Windows 10 was the issue but it is supposed to run OK on Windows 8 so Windows 10 should work, based on past experience with other software on both platforms.

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

1. Coding ability is an advantage


What does the software enable researchers to do?

Description from website: SocialMediaMineR is a social media search and analytic tool that takes one or multiple URL(s) and returns the information about the popularity and reach of the URL(s) on social media. The function get_socialmedia retrieves the number of shares, likes, tweets, pins, and hits on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, StumbleUpon, LinkedIn, and Reddit. The package also includes dedicated functions for each social networking site and a function to decode shortened URLs.

What distinguishes it from other software?

1. Mines a large number of different social media types

5. Personal impressions. Rating: 2/5

How did you, as a user, find the software?

1. Post installation, execution was an issue that made testing impossible without wasting a lot of time trying to solve the issues.


1. At face value based on the product documentation seems very powerful and flexible but was not able to demonstrate this.
SECTION 5:

MOBILE ANALYTICS TOOLS
COUNTLY (MOBILE ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: [https://count.ly/](https://count.ly/)
Account login page: [https://cloud.count.ly/](https://cloud.count.ly/)

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?
   I. Free for Cloud version to allow new users to check it out first. Cloud Edition is free for less than 10,000 sessions (opens) / month.
   II. Various enterprise packages – contact Countly for pricing.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 5/5
Note. Installation is only required if the product is purchased to be installed on private company servers which of course requires IT server admin skills. Countly’s Cloud Servers are managed by them so no technical skill required for installation or management of program by end users of cloud servers.

User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?
   I. There are different hosting options. Free accounts use Countly’s Cloud servers, storage and analytics platform. Countly Cloud Storage etc. is managed by Countly IT engineers.
   II. Enterprise customers can install Enterprise Edition either on company servers or use Countly’s Private Cloud Service. Installing on servers etc. must be done by IT Administrators.

3. Complexity. Rating: 5/5 (If used by professional IT developers or trained personnel as required.)
How difficult is to master the software?
   I. Countly is not intended to be used by novices.

Degree of specialised knowledge required?
   I. Training required.
   II. Countly couldn’t be tested for this review as its purpose is to analyse apps on mobile devices and websites on behalf of application developers. To test Countly one needs an app or apps and end users that can be analysed.
   III. As Countly will primarily be used by software developers or software development companies, people using Countly will no doubt have specialist skills to perform the wide range of tests and analysis Countly is able to do.
   IV. Countly provides a range of training material and will even undertake on-site training for large enterprises.

4. Possibilities, uniqueness: 5/5
What does the software enable researchers to do?
Countly is designed to help developers improve apps and respond to user needs. A brief description from their website states:

```
Countly is an innovative, real-time, open source mobile and desktop application analytics application. It collects data from mobile phones and website, and visualizes this information to analyze mobile application usage and end-user behavior.
```

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How does Countly differ from other analytics tools? We believe that analytics software should be simple, incomplex and should just show the necessary information, using eye catching design. Moreover, some companies may want to own their data, requiring to have analytics servers in their own premises. Since Countly is open source, you can install Countly service on your server farm.

Moreover, Countly has mobile applications for Android, and iOS devices, including iPad and iPhone, so you do not have to use a browser to check latest status of your app.

How does Countly work? Countly tracks mobile applications and mobile devices using a small plugin (SDK) that you integrate in your application in under 10 minutes. After you submit your application to relevant application store, Countly immediately starts collecting data.

Link to full documentation: http://resources.count.ly/

5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?

See sample images from website below

6. Alternative
Is there a better alternative? Why?

I. Possibly Google Analytics mobile app tracker, but not as powerful.

7. Personal impressions. Rating: 5/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. As mentioned above, I could only setup an account and access the dashboard, but was unable to run any tests. However, I could see all menus and options, which are well laid out and intuitive.

II. For a developer, it seems to be an invaluable tool and the list of enterprises using this tool is very impressive.

8. Summary. Rating: 20/20 (The high scores given to Countly are based on it being used by professional users which it is intended for. For novices it would be rated very low as training is required.)

This is a serious and mature analytics tool, used by multimillion dollar enterprises. It is also available to academic intuitions with various licencing options. The Countly Academic Program (CAP) provides institutions the right to use Countly EE for academic and teaching purposes.

Countly Sample Dataset Images

Real-time dashboard (see website for more)
Section 5: Mobile Analytics Tools

User profile analytics feature (see website for more)

Customer Retention Analytics (see website for more)

Funnels used to track goal completion rates of step by step path inside application (click to go to website)
Section 5: Mobile Analytics Tools

Re-engage users anywhere, anytime with push messaging (see website for more)

Queries and Drilling (see website for more)

Back to...
MIXPANEL (MOBILE ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: https://mixpanel.com/
Documentation page: https://mixpanel.com/help/
Login page: https://mixpanel.com/login/

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

   I. Below is the Engagement Plans pricelist which includes access to all features that analyse actions people take in your application:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Data Points</th>
<th>Monthly Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a Mixpanel partner</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startup</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>20,000,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High volume</td>
<td>50,000,000+</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   II. Below is the Peoples Plans pricelist which is an add-on that provides additional access to features that help you analyse specific users and later lets you re-engage them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Profiles</th>
<th>Monthly Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a Mixpanel partner</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50K People</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100K People</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300K People</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500K People</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1M People</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High volume</td>
<td>1,500,000+</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 4/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

   I. No installation required, Mixpanel is an online tool.
   II. I did not sign up and test Mixpanel as it is a tool for mobile app analysis and is embedded in an app or webpage. Impression was though that signing up was simple and straight forward.
How difficult is to master the software? Degree of specialised knowledge required?

I. I did not personally test Mixpanel, but my impression is that some education will be required to use the platform and its range of extensive and powerful features effectively.

II. Mixpanel provides extensive, easy to read documentation and videos tutorials which are accessible without the need to login.

III. Mixpanel University enables users to learn through videos how to implement and use Mixpanel to engage, convert, and keep customers.

IV. User reviews are mixed. Some say it is easy to use, others say it is complicated. As it is a tool primarily that will primarily be used by web or mobile app developers, a reasonable degree of computer skill would be required.

What does the software enable researchers to do?

I. The image from their website below gives a snapshot of the Mixpanel features. Each of these are explained in great detail on their website. Unlike many other tools I have looked at, their documentation/videos are easy to read/watch and understand. No coding seems to be required.

![Mixpanel Features](image)

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. Mixpanel is often compared to Google Analytics app tracker, but are they are apparently quite different. Mixpanel differs from Google Analytics in one major way: instead of tracking page views, it tracks the actions of people in mobile or web applications.

To see a list of differences between the two apps follow the link below:

[https://mixpanel.com/help/questions/articles/how-is-mixpanel-different-than-google-analytics](https://mixpanel.com/help/questions/articles/how-is-mixpanel-different-than-google-analytics)

5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?

I. Mixpanel produces a vast array of graphs and charts, all of which are highly customisable at the click of a button.

II. Video tutorials are provided giving clear instruction about how to produce and customise graphs etc.

See sample images below
6. Alternative
Is there a better alternative? Why?

I. MOZ, KISSmetrics, Optimizely which appear to be similar, but each tool has particular strengths and weakness.

II. The following links have good feedback from technical users:
   https://www.g2crowd.com/products/mixpanel/reviews

III. https://www.trustradius.com/products/mixpanel/reviews

How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. I did not personally use the software, but I did read some documentation, watched several videos and read a number of user reviews from technical users.

II. My impression is Mixpanel provides powerful analysis tools, is very effective but requires ongoing learning, like all such tools.

I. Powerful and extensive suite of tools, suite mobile/web app developer.

Mixpanel Sample Dataset Images
SECTION 6:
LOCATION ANALYTICS TOOLS
FOLLOWERWONK (LOCATION ANALYTICS TOOL)

Moz Website and Login Page: https://moz.com/
Followerwonk website: https://moz.com/followerwonk/

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

Note. Followerwonk is just one product or tool offered by Moz who produce an all-in-one suite of online search engine optimization research and analytics tools that come bundled together in their pro subscription packages listed below.

A basic free Followerwonk subscription can be used with one Twitter profile which really doesn’t offer much at all. But to use Followerwonk’s full power one must subscribe to Moz Pro.

Moz Pro (US$)

I. 30 day Trial: Free (Full credit card and personal details required upon registration)
II. Standard: $99/m, $237/y
III. Medium: $149/m, $357/y
IV. Large: $249/m, $597/y
V. Premium: $599/m, $1437/y
VI. Moz Local (separate product): $84/y.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 5/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

I. No installation required as all the Moz tools are online tools. Site sign up and registration is required and was simple and straightforward.
II. Email address, username and password are requested. A validation email is sent to your address as part of the sign up. Before you can login into Moz, you must click a link in that email to validate your email address and activate your new account.
III. Once signed in you can explore the site and all the tools that are offered in the suite.
IV. Unfortunately, to try any tool you must sign up for the 30 day free trial, but to do so your full credit card and personal details are required.
V. If the free trial isn’t cancelled before the 30 days expires, payment of US$149 is deducted from the credit card.

As a result, I did not complete a first-hand review of Followerwonk. There are however, some very informative Followerwonk reviews from users and reviewers at the following locations if more information is required:

II. https://www.g2crowd.com/products/followerwonk/reviews (Mar-Apr 2015)

3. Complexity. Rating: x/5
How difficult is to master the software?

4. Possibilities, uniqueness. Rating: x/5
What does the software enable researchers to do?
Website Description

I. Followerwonk allows users to search, segment, and compare Twitter users, track follower growth, and find out the best ways to engage their audience.

II. Find: Search Twitter bios to connect with anyone, compare Twitter accounts to find overlaps and target new influencers.

III. Analyze: Breakout your followers by location, bio, who they follow, and more, contrast your relationships with your competitors and friends.

IV. Optimize: Match your activities to gains and losses in followers to give your followers what they like best, follow and unfollow in-app to hone your social graph like a razor’s edge.

5. Presentation of results
What kinds of outputs are generated?

See sample images below

6. Personal impressions. Rating: x/5
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. From all appearances, reading other reviews and the Moz documentation, Followerwonk should be a relatively easy product to use.

7. Summary. Rating: x/20
I. Appears to be a professional mature, powerful, well supported and customisable analytics tool.

Followerwonk Sample Dataset Images from Website

Search on any profile data: bio, location, name, URL

Compare the followers of any 2-3 users to find overlaps and new audiences
Breakdown your followers by Social Authority, tweet count, follower count and more

View interactive charts of new followers and unfollows; correlate with your tweets, RTs, and mentions

Sort your followers by any criteria to find your most important, influential followers

Back →
TWEEPSMAP (LOCATION ANALYTICS TOOL)

Website: https://tweepsmap.com/
Tutorials: http://tweepsmap.com/twitter/action-report
Account login page: https://api.twitter.com/oauth/authorize?oauth_token=...dIcE...pYyE

1. Cost
What kinds of subscription are offered?

Six Plans are available as follows with up to 19 different options which are clearly detailed on the website:

I. Free (ad supported – very basic functionality);
II. Starter $4.99/month – up to 6000 followers;
III. Growth $19.99/month – up to 20,000 followers;
IV. Advanced $39.99/month - up to 50,000 followers;
V. Celebrity $99.99/month - up to 100,000 followers;
VI. Enterprise – Custom pricing based on requirements.

2. Ease of installation. Rating: 5/5
User-friendliness: how much prior technical knowledge is required?

I. No installation required – online tool.
II. Tweepsmap site registration was simple and straightforward.
III. To begin with a Twitter account is required – it is about tracking your personal Twitter followers.
IV. You must login to Tweepsmap using your personal Twitter account credentials every time you use the site. Tweepsmap uses Twitter’s authentication process to access your Tweepsmap and Twitter accounts, but as they don’t take or store your Twitter password they can only access your account through Twitter’s authorization system.
V. The first time you login in you must also provide your email address.
VI. An account Dashboard is created and all Tweepsmap functions are accessed from there.

How difficult is to master the software?

I. I could possibly have given a rating of 5, but due to my limited testing, left it at 4.
II. Performing any type of analysis is as simple as pressing a Start button, entering a hashtag or @something on the appropriate page.

Degree of specialised knowledge required?

I. From all appearances and the few things I was able to try, I would say very little specialist knowledge is required. Unlike many other sites I have looked at during this project, the language Tweepsmaps uses is not confusing, and is easy to understand and follow.
II. Based on the sample images on the site, the various presentations of data output also appear quite clear to understand and interpret.

What does the software enable researchers to do?

See: http://twittertoolsbook.com/10-awesome-twitter-analytics-visualization-tools/
Tweepsmap is designed to mine all manner of data from Twitter and is a very comprehensive tool that produces a wide range of detailed data, far too much to describe here. The following link will take you to their webpage where detailed descriptions can be viewed:

http://tweepsmap.com/twitter/action-report

Following is a list of topics from that webpage detailing Tweepsmap functions and capabilities:

I. Intelligent Publishing
II. Dashboard
III. Tweet impact and reach
IV. Audience Analysis
V. Map your followers
VI. Analyse growth/decline
VII. Follower History
VIII. Timezones / Languages
IX. Followers Drilldown
X. Analyze Your Followers
XI. Widgets
XII. Following
XIII. Following Map
XIV. Analysis Tools
XV. Competitors Analysis
XVI. Analyze Twitter list
XVII. Hashtag / Keyword Tracking

What distinguishes it from other software?

I. Its apparent simplicity for end users that sits on top of a deeply complex and analytical backend.

5. **Presentation of results**
What kinds of outputs are generated?

1. A variety of geographical maps, charts, graphs, tables, statistics presenting different types of data.

   See sample images below

6. **Personal impressions. Rating: 5/5**
How did you, as a user, find the software?

I. I was impressed by the readability, clarity and simplicity of the instructions and the ease with which I was able to start performing processes until I was required to pay money to continue.
II. A paid subscription and a host of Twitter followers would allow more comprehensive testing.

7. **Summary. Overall Rating: 19/20**
I. Simple to understand and use, produces extensive range of results that can be used and actioned immediately.
SECTION 7:
OVERVIEW COMPARISON TABLE
# Overview Comparison Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Subscription Type</th>
<th>Ease of Installation Score</th>
<th>Complexity Score</th>
<th>Possibilities/Uniqueness Score</th>
<th>Personal Impression Score</th>
<th>Overall Rating Out of 20</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Text Tools</strong></td>
<td>Discovertext</td>
<td>Free 30 trial Professional $99/m Academics $49/m Students $24/m</td>
<td>5 Online tool</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><a href="http://discovertext.com/">http://discovertext.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Social Networks Tools</strong></td>
<td>Netlytic</td>
<td>Tier 1 – Free: 3 databases, basic features. Tier 2 – Free: 5 databases, suit academic projects. Tier 3 – various prices: 300 databases, full featured</td>
<td>4 Online tool</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><a href="https://netlytic.org/home/">https://netlytic.org/home/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Hyperlink Tools</strong></td>
<td>Twitonomy</td>
<td>1. Free with limited features. 2. $20 one off fee for 1 month full access. 3. $19/m full access. 4. $199/y full access on special (normally $240).</td>
<td>5 Online tool</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td><a href="http://twitonomy.com/">http://twitonomy.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Text Tools</strong></td>
<td>Netlytic</td>
<td>See above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Hyperlink Tools</strong></td>
<td>Issue Crawler</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>4 Online tool</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td><a href="https://www.issuercrawler.net/">https://www.issuercrawler.net/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Type</td>
<td>Product Name</td>
<td>Subscription Type</td>
<td>Ease of Installation Score</td>
<td>Complexity Score</td>
<td>Possibilities/Uniqueness Score</td>
<td>Personal Impression Score</td>
<td>Overall Rating Out of 20</td>
<td>URL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hyperlink Tools</td>
<td>Webometrics Analyst</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>1 Downloadable app - requires a Windows Azure Marketplace Account Key to run</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><a href="http://lexiurl.wlv.ac.uk/">http://lexiurl.wlv.ac.uk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Actions Tools</td>
<td>Google Analytics</td>
<td>1. Free accounts for small business. 2. Premium (paid) accounts for larger to enterprise sized businesses – prices on application.</td>
<td>3 Online tool</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/analytics/">http://www.google.com/analytics/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SocialMediaMineR</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>2 Downloadable app with 2 separate components to install</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td><a href="https://www.r-project.org/">https://www.r-project.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mobile Tools</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>1. Free for Cloud version for 10,000 sessions (opens) / month 2. Various enterprise packages – contact County for prices.</td>
<td>5 Online tool and server side tool (for IT Admins and programmers)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td><a href="https://count.ly/">https://count.ly/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Type</td>
<td>Product Name</td>
<td>Subscription Type</td>
<td>Ease of Installation Score</td>
<td>Complexity Score</td>
<td>Possibilities/Uniqueness Score</td>
<td>Personal Impression Score</td>
<td>Overall Rating Out of 20</td>
<td>URL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixpanel</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 different price options - see documentation for full list.</td>
<td>4 Online tool</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><a href="https://mixpanel.com/">https://mixpanel.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Location Tools</td>
<td>Followerwonk</td>
<td>Moz Pro (US$) 1. 30 day Free Trial. 2. Standard: $99/m, $237/y. 3. Medium: $149/m, $357/y. 4. Large: $249/m, $597/y. 5. Premium: $599/m, $1437/y. Moz Local 1. $84/y.</td>
<td>This is an online tool, but a review wasn’t conducted due to the requirement to provide payment details to sign up for the free trial.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td><a href="https://moz.com/">https://moz.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 8:

BOOK EVALUATION
BOOK EVALUATION

Title
Seven Layers of Social Media Analytics: Mining Business Insights from Social Media Text, Actions, Networks, Hyperlinks, Apps, Search Engine, and Location Data

Author
Gohar F. Khan

Companion Website
http://7layersanalytics.com/

Publisher’s Description
The book offers concepts, tools, tutorials, and case studies that business managers need to extract and analyse the seven layers of social media data, including text, actions, networks, apps, hyperlinks, search engines, and location layers. Social media analytics is about converting unstructured social media data into meaningful business insights. By the end of this book, you will have mastered the concepts, techniques, and tools used to extract business insights from social media that help increase brand loyalty, generate leads, drive traffic, and ultimately make good business decisions. The book is non-technical in nature best suited for business managers, owners, consultants, students, and professors, etc.

Book Structure:

- Chapter 1: The Seven Layers of Social Media Analytics
- Chapter 2: Understanding Social Media
- Chapter 3: Social Media Text Analytics
- Chapter 4: Social Media Network Analytics
- Chapter 5: Social Media Actions Analytics
- Chapter 6: Social Media Apps Analytics
- Chapter 7: Social Media Hyperlinks Analytics
- Chapter 8: Social Media Location Analytics
- Chapter 9: Social Media Search Engine Analytics
- Chapter 10: Aligning Social Media Analytics with Business Goals

The book’s companion website (http://7layersanalytics.com/) offers Updated Tutorials, Power-Point Slide, Case Studies, Sample Data, and Syllabus. The updated material is only available to people who have or are planning to purchase the book and/or are lecturers or trainers at an educational institution. Proof of your status must be provided upon registration. Once approved, you receive a password to access the updated material.

Evaluate how “Seven Layers Of Media Analytics” presents these tools.
1. Are the tools presented clearly?

The book lists most of the tools covered in the analytics software review, but also lists others not covered in the review. Due to the large number of tools now available, providing in-depth discussion and/or tutorials on each one would take considerable time and result in a very large book. Each of the seven chapters from 3 to 10 is devoted to a different layer or category of social media analytics, allowing Khan to methodically explain the theory around the layer, and list and briefly describe a number of tools related to each layer. Khan has selected one tool from each layer and presented a case study as well as a step-by-step tutorial of his selection.
Following is a simple breakdown by chapter of the tools that were included in both the analytics software review and the book.

Chapter 3: The following Text Analytics tools included in the analytics software review are listed in Chapter 3 which discusses Social Media Text Analytics:

Discovertext, Twitonomy, Netlytic, Lexalytics, LIWC. Symplur is not listed by Khan, but he also lists others not included in the analytics software review.

Pp. 41–58 presents a case study and step by step tutorial using Semantria, a text analysis tool developed by Lexalytics.

Chapter 4: Only one Network Analytics tool included in the analytics software review is listed in Chapter 4 which discusses Social Media Network Analytics:

NodeXL. Netlytic, listed in the analytics software review as both a text analytics and social network analytics tool, is not included by Khan as a network analytics tool.

Pp. 70–81 presents a Social Media Network Analytics case study and step by step tutorial using NodeXL.

Chapter 5: The following Actions Analytics tools included in the analytics software review are listed in Chapter 5 which discusses Social Media Actions Analytics:

SocialMediaMineR, Hootsuite, Google Analytics, Lithium. Khan also lists others not included in the analytics software review.

Pp. 89–95 presents a Social Media Actions Analytics case study and step by step tutorial using Hootsuite.

Chapter 6: The following Mobile Analytics tools included in the analytics software review are listed in Chapter 6 which discusses Social Media Apps Analytics:

Countly, Mixpanel. Khan also includes Google Analytics here as it includes mobile app tracking and analytics.

Pp. 103–112 presents a Social Media App Analytics case study and step by step tutorial using Countly.

Chapter 7: The following Hyperlink Analytics tools included in the analytics software review are listed in Chapter 7 which discusses Social Media Hyperlink Analytics:

Webometrics Analyst, VOSON, Issue Crawler, Backlink Watch, Link Diagnosis. Issue Crawler is not included in Khan’s list, but he also lists others not included in the analytics software review.

Pp. 119–127 presents a Social Media Hyperlinks Analytics case study and step by step tutorial using VOSON.

Chapter 8: The following Location Analytics tools included in the analytics software review are listed in Chapter 8 which discusses Social Media Location Analytics:

Tweepsmap, Followerwonk. Khan also lists others not included in the analytics software review.

Pp. 134–142 presents a Social Media Location Analytics case study and step by step tutorial using Google Fusion Tables, which was not included in the analytics software review.

Chapter 9 deals with Search Engine Analytics tools which were not included in the analytics software review.

Chapter 10 discusses the subject of Aligning Social Media Analytics with Business Goals which was not included in the analytics software review.
2. Are the exercises useful?

Prior to presenting his case study and tutorial in each chapter, Khan discusses and explains the context, theory and terminology related to each category of analytics tool. This is very useful as social media analytics is a difficult subject to understand. Being underpinned by a lot of IT-speak also makes it difficult to understand, and it can be quite confusing for the uninitiated. Having clear descriptions and definitions of the terminology is helpful and necessary, and Khan’s writing style breaks it down to comprehensible language for people unfamiliar with such terminology. However, at the same time, the book doesn’t appear to have been properly proof-read before going to print: it contains a lot of writing and grammatical errors, many of which appear in places where they confuse the topic being discussed.

The case studies provide the reader with real life scenarios demonstrating how and why particular analytics tools were used. The problem to be solved is addressed, and the process leading to the outcome of the analytics is mapped out in an easy to understand way.

The tutorials walk the reader step-by-step through the whole process from signing up to a website or downloading and installing and using a particular tool. For people who have never used these types of products before the tutorials would be a good place to start. The tutorials cannot of course cover every possible scenario related to each tool, but they provide a good starting point. The tutorials are also supported with screenshots where appropriate which is helpful.

While reviewing tools for this study, the help files provided with some tools were very difficult to comprehend because of the language and terminology used. Khan’s tutorials provide a practical alternative in these situations to get people started. While many tools reviewed had excellent documentation and video tutorials, Khan’s simple but detailed instructions provide a good complement or alternative to help people start and get acquainted with particular tools.

3. Is the book a useful resource?

For anyone embarking on any type of social media analytics, The Seven Layers of Social Media Analytics is an excellent place to start. Besides the information outlined above, Khan devotes Chapters 1 and 2 to explaining, defining and discussing the whole concept and framework of the seven layers of social media analytics. The average person has probably never heard about this topic, even though we are all aware of and probably use different types of social media. These first two chapters build a very necessary foundation that underpins the following chapters, as many of the terms, themes and concepts discussed in them are made clear in these chapters.

Even if a reader only intends trying or using one analytics tool, I would strongly encourage that person to read Chapters 1 and 2 first as it will make the whole process a lot easier. Khan also encourages readers at the beginning of some tutorials to go through Chapters 1 and 2 if they haven’t previously done so or are struggling with the terminology.

4. How did you, as a user, find the manual?

Due to time constraints, I did not read the book from cover to cover. I did read Chapters 1 and 2 to begin with and found them beneficial in clarifying a lot of the terminology associated with social media analytics. Despite being a computer user since the mid-1980s DOS days and involved in the IT industry since 1997, I was unfamiliar with many of the terms and concepts related to analytics that Khan discusses.

Before starting a review on a particular tool, I read through what Khan had to say about the particular tool if it was covered in the book, but did not work through his tutorials as time did not allow. I relied more on the
Section 8: Book Evaluation

documentation and videos provided on the associated website, which is what most people without the book would have to do.

5. What (if anything) is missing?

The subject at the heart of the book is very complex and constantly changing and evolving. There is no doubt Khan could have included more information or case studies and tutorials. But more would not necessarily be better, it may have simply been overwhelming and confusing for the reader. Instead, he has tried to adequately and clearly inform the reader while remaining succinct. There are many other tools he could have included in his lists and possibly other tools he could have provided tutorials on, but with a book of this nature, where do you stop?

A common thread I saw in online comments about many of the analytics tools was the difficulty for users in keeping up with the changes developers continually make to their products. However, analytics tool developers also have to keep up to the constant changes and advances being made to social media platforms, so it is a Catch-22 situation. The technical information addressed by Khan will in time change and evolve as well, but establishing a companion website to the book allows him to add updated information for owners of his book as required.

Book Cover

Front Cover  Back Cover