



## Our Perspective

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### The use of social media in intelligence

Research shows that 42% of the total global population are currently active internet users<sup>1</sup>. This equates to just over 3 billion people, who between them have more than 2 billion active social media accounts. This figure is expected to increase to the equivalent of one-third of the world's population by the end of 2015.

It makes sense therefore that the first point of call in any open-source intelligence research and analysis is social media. But what are the potential benefits and drawbacks of relying on intelligence collected through this medium?

#### Geography

A major deciding factor in the availability of social media intelligence on any given subject is geography.

Regional penetration figures for the internet vary dramatically from 88% in North America, to just 19% in South Asia. It stands to reason that a person or business in a developed region will be easier to identify through social media sources than one based in a country with more limited access to the hardware and software necessary to run a social media account.

#### Demographics

*"The people who use social media such as Twitter and Facebook tend to be younger, richer, more educated and more urban than the population in general."*<sup>2</sup>

Subjects from this background will be more likely to have a presence on social media than someone of an older generation, or from a more rural region.

#### Privacy

To private (as opposed to public sector) intelligence gatherers, privacy settings on social media accounts can be an issue.

If you are investigating a private individual with no obvious business interests other than their current

employment, privacy settings on their personal accounts may limit information from a social media source. More and more of us are becoming privacy-conscious and adjusting our account settings so only approved contacts can see them. However, anyone promoting a business venture, such as an entrepreneur, will almost certainly have some presence on social media linked with this enterprise and should be more readily accessible as a result.

As social media evolves, privacy has become more important to its users, prompting a shift in attitude by the big players, such as Mark Zuckerberg's u-turn from 'Privacy no longer a social norm' in 2010, to actively adjusting Facebook's privacy settings to improve them in July 2014.<sup>3</sup>

#### User-generated content

By its very nature, information contained in social media profiles, posts and comments is user-generated. That is to say, generated by the account holder themselves, or any other user allowed to comment by virtue of their links to the account holder and any privacy settings.

This source of information holds great benefits in terms of it being real-time information, gathered on the ground from the subject of your investigation, or from those close to them.

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<sup>1</sup> [wearesocial.net/blog/2015/01/digital-social-mobile-worldwide-2015/](http://wearesocial.net/blog/2015/01/digital-social-mobile-worldwide-2015/)

<sup>2</sup> *Introducing Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT)*, Intelligence and National Security, DOI:10.1080/02684527.2012.716965. First published by Routledge on 28th September 2012. P. 10.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/jan/11/facebook-privacy> & [http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future\\_tense/2014/07/facebook\\_s\\_privacy\\_pivot\\_mark\\_zuckerberg\\_s\\_plan\\_to\\_win\\_back\\_trust.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/07/facebook_s_privacy_pivot_mark_zuckerberg_s_plan_to_win_back_trust.html)

Conversely, one potential pitfall of intelligence from social media sources, is the spread of half-truths, exaggerations and outright falsehood - whether unintended or deliberate. Add this to the vast amount of information available, and sorting out what is relevant and true from speculation and rumour can be an uphill battle.

### Conclusion

It is clear that in this day and age information from a social media source - social intelligence, or (for the public sector) SOCMINT<sup>4</sup> - cannot be ignored. However, a few basic rules of gathering intelligence, or accessing it, should be observed in order to make sure that we can rely on such information as a basis for decision-making.

If we follow the solid methodology of collection and processing by the researcher, followed by validation and interpretation, in context with a big picture view of all sources of intelligence, carried out by a more senior analyst, then we will build a clear idea of exactly what decisions can rely on the information gathered, based on its validity.

*"The 'success' of intelligence is not the information or even secrets that it collects, but the value it adds to decision-making."<sup>5</sup>*

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### Why we do what we do

At Kasalana we have a client-centric approach to intelligence and believe in giving our clients what they need. The information we supply is openly asked for and freely given, and all our work is overseen by senior consultants with many years' experience in their field. With an ethical approach to investigation, we support improvements in global business practices and security.

All our intelligence is individually sourced and produced at the time of commissioning to answer the specific needs of our clients. We work honestly and transparently using a global network of resources to provide timely and accurate information to international clients. To read case studies, please go to [www.kasalana.com](http://www.kasalana.com).

### Consultation meetings

If you would like a free consultation with Kasalana, please email [info@kasalana.com](mailto:info@kasalana.com) quoting reference OP7C.

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<sup>4</sup> A term first introduced in the above paper by Demos, a think tank.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p. 7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2012.716965>

### Who we are

Formed in 2005, Kasalana is a specialist corporate intelligence company that conducts investigations globally on behalf of clients from industries including automotive, aviation, construction, consumer products, defence, energy, engineering, financial services, insurance, legal, manufacturing, media, medical, mining, retail, services, technology and telecommunications. We are experts in enhanced due diligence, background checks and legal support services including asset tracing & litigation support, corporate fraud investigations, merger & acquisition support and strategic & market intelligence. Our clients include FTSE-100, FTSE-250 and Fortune 500 corporations, global financial institutions, major law firms and leading private equity houses.

Prior to forming Kasalana Sam Pope was Head of Business Intelligence, Deputy Director of Corporate Investigations and EMEA Director of Fraud & Forensic Services for a leading global security risk management company, where he led a team of 40+ investigators. A former defence journalist, Sam has extensive experience of investigating fraudulent activity including asset misappropriation, bribery and corruption, intellectual property fraud, false accounting, securities and investment fraud, regulatory and anti-trust violations. He frequently works in close collaboration with clients' other professional advisers. He is a member of the *American Society for Industrial Security* and the *Association of Certified Fraud Examiners*.

Gareth Crooker joined Kasalana in 2010 after working as Director of Corporate Investigations, South-East Asia, for a leading global security risk management company. He has been a business risk consultant for more than 20 years and specialises in pre-investment and compliance-driven due diligence and business intelligence. Gareth has also conducted bespoke research and analysis into the political, commercial and security risk environment in Europe and the Former Soviet Union. As well as his native English, Gareth has near-fluent French and Spanish, together with basic Italian and Dutch.