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Management**



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The use of social media data to evaluate candidates' engagement with a green and inclusive development agenda in Brazil

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Outline

1. Example of social media data in evaluations
2. Implications of SM on the broader context of Evaluation
3. What Social Media is from the donors' and projects' perspective
4. Interactive discussion / Q&A

1. Example of social media listening in evaluations

Evaluation in support of a green transition project in Brazil

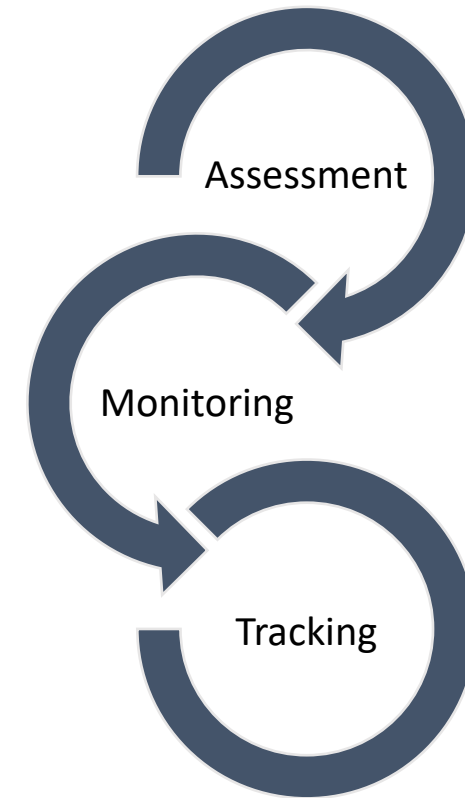
Strengthening the green and inclusive agenda for development in the Brazilian Northeast

Aiming that the government and population have a greater commitment to:

- Transitioning to more renewable energy sources
- Revitalising the Sao Francisco River Basin

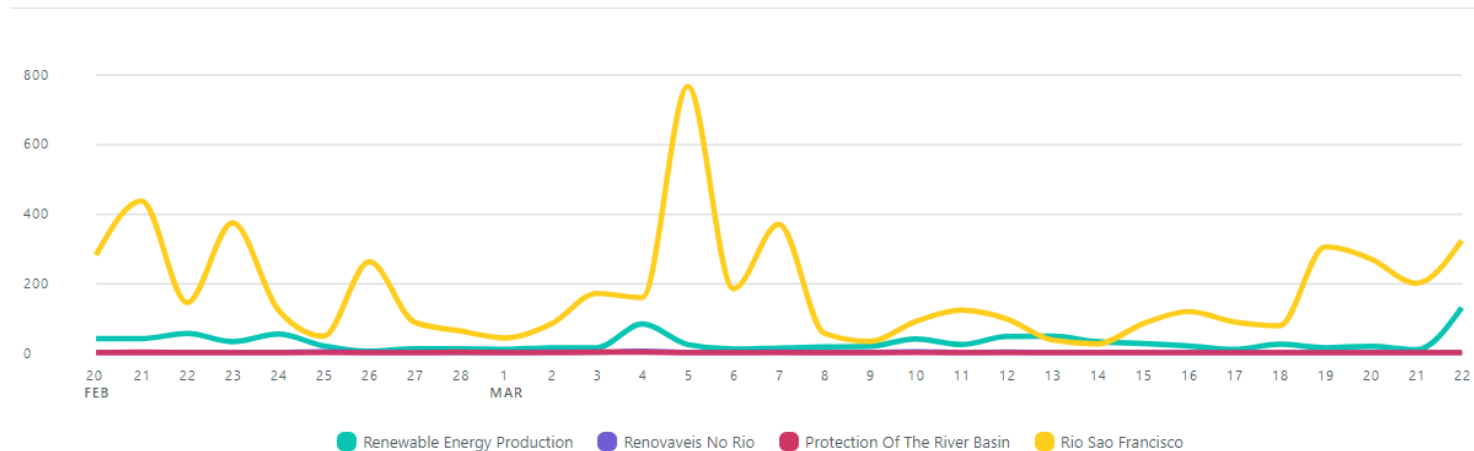
Design approach

- Assessing any shift in conversation or narrative around renewable energy production and the protection of the Sao Francisco River Basin.
- Monitoring Social Media on the key topics and identifying frequency of posts, engagement, sentiment and analysis of themes discussed.
- Tracking public accounts of candidates and using a scorecard to identify their current level of engagement and commitment with a green transition and protection of the Sao Francisco River Basin

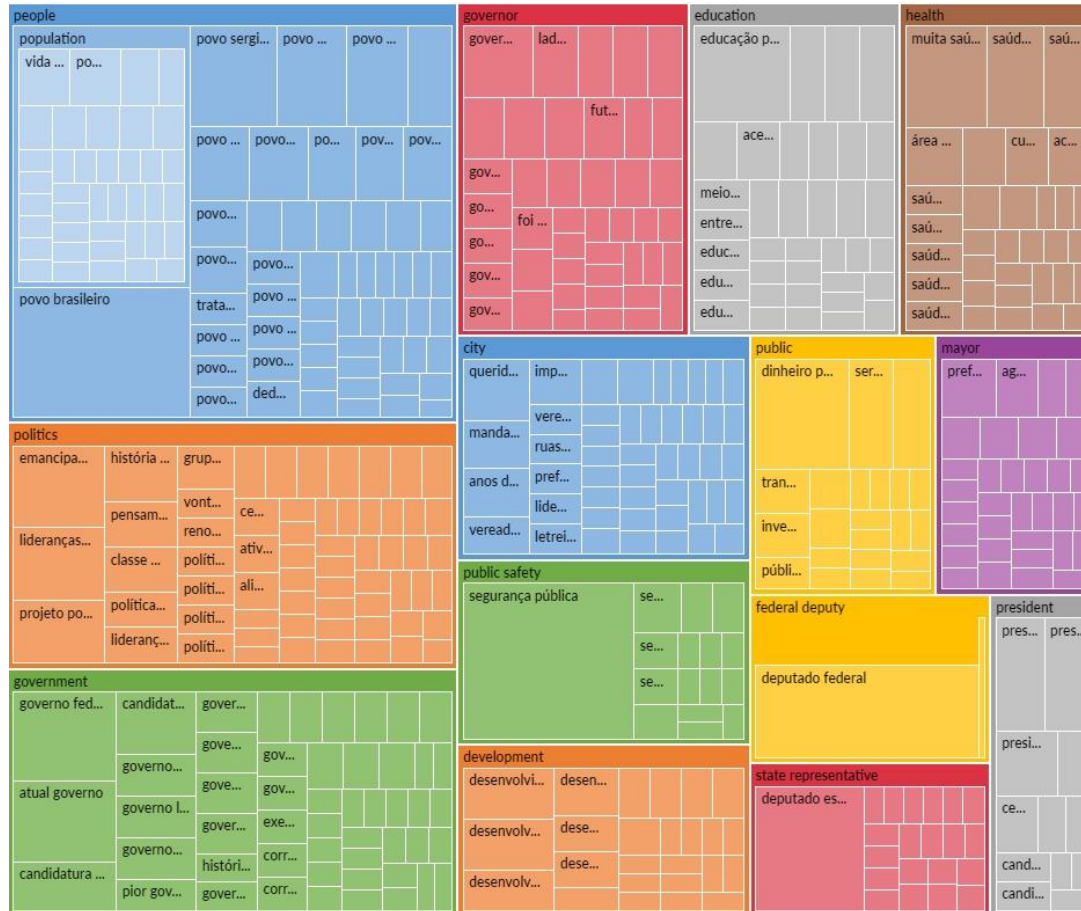


Usual techniques

- Text search is used to select pertinent posts.
- Line graphs show volume of posts, of engagements...
- Examples of most relevant posts (selecting negative or positive posts)



Candidates' priorities



Scorecard

Categories that allow us to identify the level of alignment and commitment of the candidates with green development and the renovation of the Sao Francisco River basin

Score	Description
-2	Highly contrary to the objectives of the green agenda / revitalisation of the São Francisco river basin
-1	Partially contrary to the objectives of the objectives of the green agenda / revitalisation of the São Francisco river basin
0	No position, or neutrality on green agenda / revitalisation of the São Francisco river basin
1	Partially in favour of green agenda / revitalisation of the São Francisco river basin
2	Strongly in favour of green agenda / revitalisation of the São Francisco river basin

Assessing alignment with the campaigns

Alignment	Criteria	Factor
Good	the candidate's post expresses intent, is adhering to principles, shows a proposal for action or claims credits for prior actions in a manner explicitly compatible with the principles and proposals provided for in the Plano.	5
Neutral	the post of the candidate, although dealing with matters related to the development agenda, omits explicit positioning or does not present sufficient evidence to allow its classification in the other categories.	0
Bad	the candidate's post expresses intent, is adhering to principles, shows a proposal for action or claims credits for previous actions in a way explicitly contrary to the principles and proposals provided for in the Plano.	-5

Assessing commitment with the campaigns

Engagement	Criteria	Factor
Low-level commitment	A very common level of engagement in political communications for non-specialised audiences. It consists of a brief citation of the candidate's intention but does not explore the topic in depth.	0,3
Somewhat committed	It consists not only of the citation of an intention of the candidate but also of the principles that will guide the realisation of it, for example: "Land regularisation and the granting of forests to the private sector will contribute to the rational and sustainable exploitation of the Amazon. "	0,6
Extremely Committed	Consists of a commitment to an action or claim credit for specific action already carried out	1

Categorising

Category	Stratum	Score
Highly contrary	[-5;- 3,1]	-2
Partially contrary	[-3; -1,1]	-1
Neutral	[-1; 1]	0
Partially favourable	[1,1; 3]	1
Highly favourable	[3,1; 5]	2

Results at the baseline

Score	Sao Francisco River Basin
-2	No candidate was included in this category
-1	2 candidates were included in this category
0	31 candidates were included in this category
1	1 candidate was included in this category
2	1 candidate was included in this category

Score	Green Development
-2	1 candidate was included in this category
-1	No candidate was included in this category
0	29 candidates were included in this category
1	5 candidates were included in this category
2	No candidate was included in this category

Learnings so far

With a strong understanding of the context, SML tools provide a powerful means to identify trends and patterns.

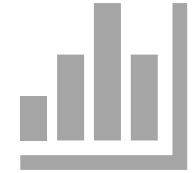
SML allowed access to high profile individuals, but there are challenges to determine attribution.

2. Implications of SM on the broader context of Evaluation

'Traditional' Evaluation Approaches (and some limitations)

Quantitative approaches

Limitations: depth traded for breadth, large samples expensive



Qualitative methods

Limitations: rapport takes time, small samples mean limited generalizability, bias



Quant-Qual techniques

Limitations: not really quant, researcher scoring subjective and can introduce bias



Why should SM approaches interest us as evaluators?

Because they address some of the limitations of traditional approaches

The fly on the wall: SML allows us to observe and monitor change in opinion and discourse without the Hawthorne Effect

Algorithmic approaches help mitigate observer and confirmation bias

Relatively inexpensive to engage with large samples

In mixed-methods evaluations, SML offers another way of triangulating findings

Zeitgeist: we live in an age of social media and this needs to be reflected in innovation within the social sciences

Where can we best apply SML?

Ideal for evaluation of campaigns, governance, behaviour change, policy programmes

- Studies of opinions and attitudes
- Studies of public policy positions and public reception of these

Less ideal for evaluation of 'hard' interventions (e.g., nutritional supplements, cash transfers...)

- Best evaluated via experimental design, surveys, anthropometry

Some limitations of SM approaches

Explanatory power, opening the black box

Attribution

Choice of keywords extremely critical

Fast-changing SM landscape

Data protection laws can make stratification challenging

Elephant in the room: smartphone and internet access and use in populations of interest

SM best used in complementarity with other approaches

3. What Social Media is from the donors' and projects' perspective

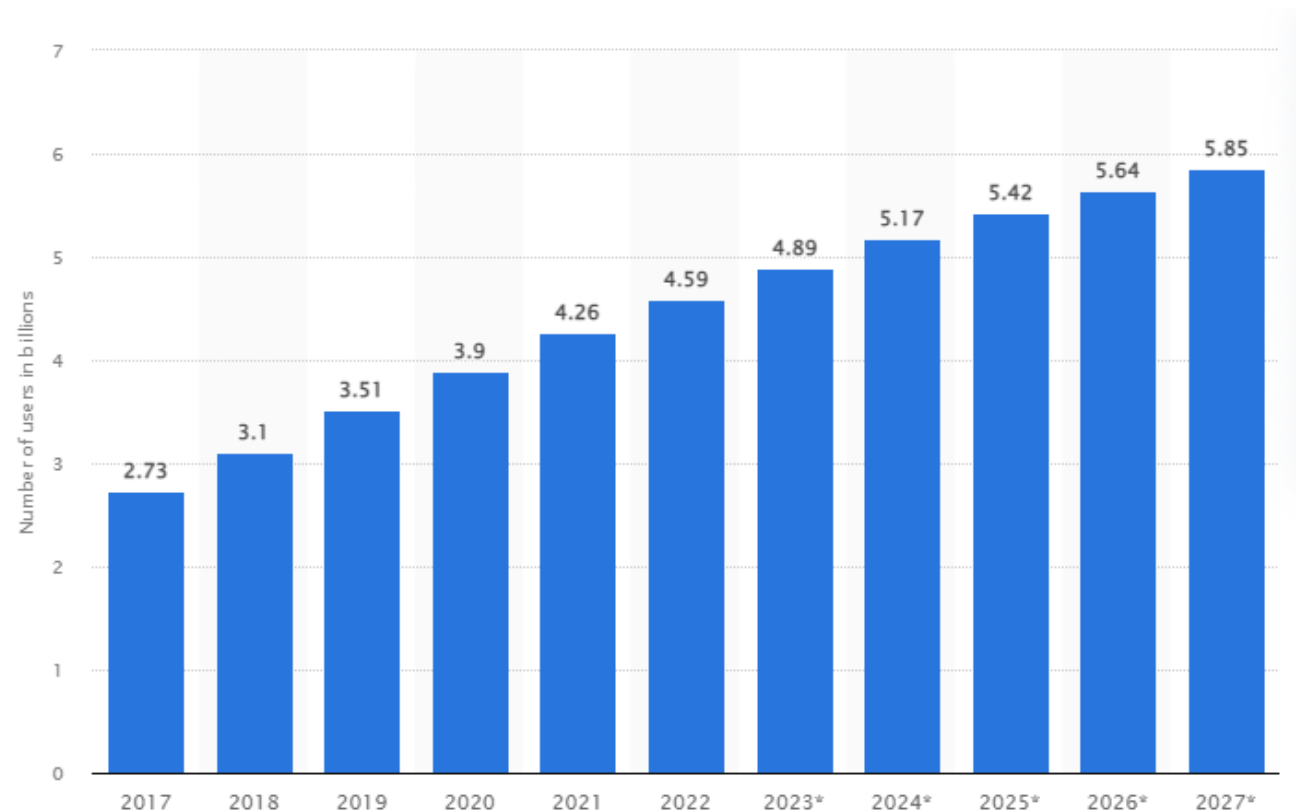
Greater impacts for a more equal world

- SM methods provide a timely approach to evaluation allowing course correction throughout the project lifecycle
 - Real-time data
 - Continuous learning and understanding of the context
- Findings can be used to improve implementation of future programmes
- Robust evaluations generate data that can be used for better decision making when allocating funding and reviewing ongoing work with partners
 - E.g., scaling up or prioritising specific interventions

The potential of Social Media for impact evaluations

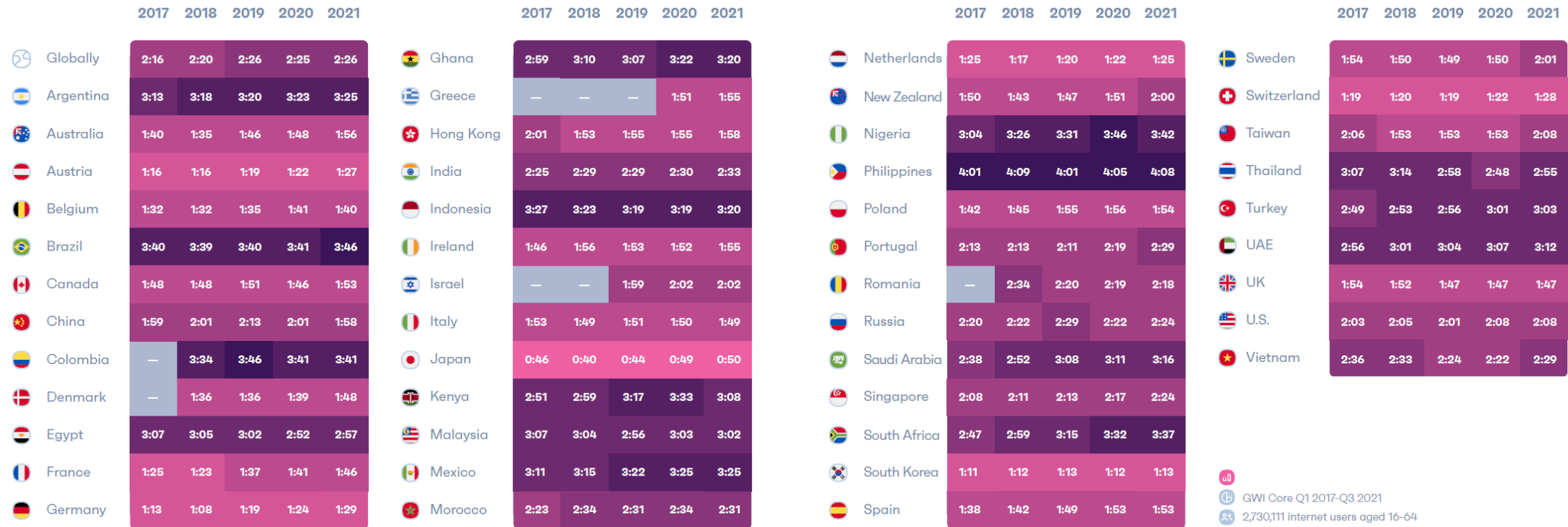
- Technology has given researchers and evaluators direct access to opinions and attitudes of billions of people.
- In 2021, over 4.26bn people were using social media worldwide
- Number of users projected to increase to 5.85bn in 2027
- Social media users in LMIC spending ~3.5 hours on social media per day – higher than Europe, Asia and North America

Number of social media users worldwide from 2018 to 2027



Source: Statista 2022

Daily time spent on social media across countries



The impact of the public on politics and policy

Public opinion has a significant influence on policy (in democracies) 30 studies over 40 years have shown that policy is affected by opinion most of the time (74%)

- Often (35% of the time) the impact matters substantively

SM tools can be useful for tracking public awareness and public will, and how these could lead to shifts in policy and regulation

Social media **monitoring** can answer the following questions:

- What is the *sentiment* of conversations related to a topic?
- What is the *volume* of conversation for specific topics in a given location?
- What is the level of *engagement* with a campaign on social media platforms? E.g., # of shares, # of likes, # of comments

Social media **listening** can help to understand:

- *Who* is messaging about topics of interest and what is the narrative?
- *Where* are these topics mentioned?
- What are the *attitudes and opinions*?

4. Interactive discussion / Q&A

Thank you!

