

Popular Media Scan Tool

Understanding a dilemma through a broad look at what is published in popular media

Goal:

A Popular Media Scan will help you understand your dilemma's context by exploring it through the lens of popular media. A media scan acts as a cultural barometer by registering what is happening or emerging outside of your organization. The tool scans broadcast news, magazines, and even television programs. Popular media scans provide a high-level understanding of the trend, what is on peoples' minds, and what cultural trackers find new and noteworthy.

The insights from your Popular Media Scan will be captured in the Analysis and Synthesis Tool.

Instructions:

1. Define the general issues.

Identify the key related issues or themes on this topic using the Problem Description Template and the patterns identified from the Staff Survey. For example, in a fictional case, the staff reported several issues with the cafeteria food worthy of exploration:

- Lack of nutritional information
- Crowded facilities
- Poor waste disposal options
- Limited hours

The identified issues are all related to the broader topic of **staff benefits**. (This broader topic provides a fifth issue area to research, so add it to the list.)

2. Identify diverse sources of information.

Include:

- News Outlets
- Magazines
- Social platforms (and identify related hashtags to search for)
- TV Programming
- Blogs and podcasts

3. Seek related information.

Target specific media outlets based on your industry or theme. Google is great for developing a wide spectrum of sources, but it won't give you the same search results as a direct search on Medium or Fast Company.

4. Capture what is being written and by whom.

For the most part, you are skimming emerging or breaking news when you conduct initial searches. Building a library of findings, such as screenshots of headlines, will help you create an evolving library of findings. You can place these findings on the Miro data board. At times, however, you will need to go deeper into an article to (a) either find a source or (b) to be able to interpret the finding and understand how it contributes to an insight. ([example](#))

5. Look for patterns.

Sift through the information to reveal patterns of activity. Consider not just patterns in what is being said, but also patterns in how it is being said (i.e the angle), by whom, and for what purposes.

6. Look at adjacent topics as well.

Consider emerging trends in adjacent topics as well, and what that is saying about the topic that you are researching.

7. Summarize findings on the [Analysis and Synthesis Data Tool](#)

Identify key themes, falling back on pattern grouping analysis to do this ([example](#)).

- What is happening in culture?
- What are the key cultural currents?

8. Next, interpret the themes:

- What do they mean?
- Why are they relevant to this case?
- What do they tell you about this case?

Use this interpretation to begin to form your insights.

Tips:

- Limit your time—do a bit of research each day for no more than 1 week
- Skim what is available for key takeaways
- Be careful of rabbit holes—while it is important to look at adjacent topic, limit the spread of any topic
- Look for source code; much of media is a reaction to a single source (happening, event, research release, etc). Keep digging until you uncover that source and use that as the reference.