

Key considerations when selecting a media monitoring service in Latin America

Finding the right **media monitoring services** in Latin America is a huge challenge. Large international media monitoring services compete with local, regionally based firms making it a competitive environment for buyers to navigate.

There are lots of factors to consider, not the least of which is that the media landscape in Latin America is huge. The most-established media monitoring services provider in the region monitors more than 25 newspapers, 13 television outlets, 16 radio stations, and more than 1,000 online news sites in just Mexico alone. You can easily see how complicated the job of **media tracking** in Latin America can be and that's in just one country!

So how do you decide which media monitoring service in Latin America to trust? Does it have to be located in the region, or can a large international provider outside the region give you the media monitoring you need?

Key questions to consider

Before beginning your search for a media monitoring services provider in Latin America, here are some questions to consider:

- Offline or online? For print monitoring, do you want to monitor publications that are online or will you also need to monitor publications only available in print?
- Broadcast: for television or radio, which programs and which channels do you want to follow and are they available for free on-air or only on paid subscription services like cable?
- Human or machine monitoring? When deciding the scope of your monitoring, is it as simple as a specific brand name or is your media monitoring challenge more complex, such as following an ongoing issue that doesn't lend itself to a handful of keywords?
- Delivering your results: How do you want your media monitoring results delivered? Is a daily email with your results sufficient or do you need access to an online platform so your team can check your results at any time and from any location?

These are some of the basic questions you need to answer before you start your search for media monitoring services in Latin America.

Now, let's take a look at each question in detail.

Online vs offline media: Print can be hard to get

Not all service providers are equal when it comes to monitoring offline publications in Latin America. The biggest names in international media monitoring may have limited coverage of offline print if any at all. And even some regionally based media monitoring providers may not be able to help you if you need to follow a publication that is offline.

For print only, you'll need to work with a regionally based consultant who can help you find a local monitoring company that can help you get coverage. That's because unlike monitoring done remotely by computer using keywords and artificial intelligence, monitoring a physical publication is done by humans who actually purchase and read the publications.

Take for example a mining company that called Latin Media Monitor looking to follow specific newspapers, radio and television stations in Chile's Norte Grande region, specifically in Antofagasta and Calama. We worked to find a local clipping service that had access to the offline print media the client needed in order to closely follow events happening on the ground.

Broadcast monitoring: Cable TV is different

Purchasing broadcast monitoring in Latin America can be easier because most media monitoring services both inside and outside of the region offer coverage of the major radio and television stations in each country.

There can be difficulties, however, in getting access to local radio and TV as opposed to national broadcasts. And there can be difficulties getting access to paid cable services.

A recent client called with a request to monitor advertising on CBNC on the SKY cable network. None of the large international or regional based monitoring services offered it. It took some digging, but at Latin Media Monitor we were able to locate the best media monitoring service in Mexico specializing in monitoring advertising—including on SKY. Pricing was very competitive, too.

Costs can be higher if the radio or television stations you want to monitor aren't on the media lists of the major providers.

Another key factor to consider when monitoring radio and television in Latin America is that it is mostly not done by computer. Most if not all of the monitoring is done by humans who actually listen to the programming. That makes budget considerations key since broadcast monitoring is more expensive than monitoring by computer.

Plus, costs can be even higher if the radio or television station you want to monitor isn't on the media lists of the major media monitoring services providers.

Monitoring complex issues requires special measures

Most media monitoring today is performed using sophisticated and well-established technology that flags keywords. The client receives a listing of list of results, including links to the original articles, scans of print articles, and short summaries of broadcast coverage. Analysis, such as whether the coverage is negative or positive, has also been automated to a large degree.

But is keyword monitoring done by machine always your best option?

Keyword monitoring done by artificial intelligence has limitations. It may be OK for monitoring the number of times your brand name or your competitors' show up in media coverage, but it may miss important coverage that doesn't contain your keywords. This why automated keyword monitoring isn't always the right fit for all jobs.

Take the case of a law firm representing a client involved in negotiations with a government in Latin America. To maintain its client's competitive position in the negotiations, the firm must be on top of even the slightest changes in the government's negotiating position—and on a daily basis.

The firm negotiators have to know what government officials are saying both on and off the record and to specific journalists. Key coverage may be contained in opinion columns and editorials or articles that don't contain the client's keywords, making accurate monitoring by machine highly unreliable.

Human media analysts may be your best option

This is why media monitoring done by professional media analysts instead of computers is an important segment of media monitoring services in Latin America and elsewhere. And one of the most important skills—if not the most important is the analyst’s news judgement. The analysts must have in-depth understanding of the client’s business and interests when monitoring media coverage in order to identify coverage with the most strategic value for the client.

How to you find a qualified media analyst in the region where you want to monitor coverage? Assembling a team of media analysts, especially if you’re in a hurry, can be very difficult. There are international companies that specialize in providing media analysts with the language skills you need. But local media monitoring companies are also a good option and may provide the service at a significant discount over the larger providers.

Serving up your monitoring results: Lots of options

Formatting of media monitoring results doesn’t differ greatly between providers. What differentiates them is the delivery method and additional information, such as audience size and value.

The least complicated delivery method is by email: you get a daily email bulletin with your coverage results. You receive a short headline for each article or broadcast and three or four lines of summary text. Click on the title and it takes you to the actual online article, an audio file of the radio clip, a video file of the TV clip, or a photo of the offline print article.

A key differentiating factor between media monitoring providers in Latin America is a choice in how you get your results.

The largest provider in Latin America, when monitoring offline and online print media, includes in its results the size of the circulation of offline print media. For online coverage you get the digital publication’s number of monthly visits, the number of page views, and the advertising value of the audience.

Get your results online for easier access

A key differentiating factor between media monitoring services in Latin America is a choice in how you can get your results. The biggest providers give you a website to visit where you can view your results and even download them in Excel format. Another valuable option is the ability to download past results in Excel. Having access to your results history on line means multiple members of your team can view and analyze them.

Some clients, especially PR firms, may request their results via RSS feed. An RSS feed directly connected to their servers gives the agency immediate access to the results and the ability to present them to clients using their own web platform. The agency then has unlimited design and presentation options for personalizing the presentation to each client on the agency’s website.

Here, we’ve reviewed just some of the factors you will want to consider when purchasing media monitoring services in Latin America. Many more, such as monitoring done by human analysis, copyright considerations, pricing, and social media monitoring in the region will be addressed in future blogging.

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