

# Facebook Reactions a gift to advertisers, cops

By Ali Winston, Reveal

Facebook's new "Reactions" – a thumbs-up, a heart and four faces with expressions ranging from mirth to shock, sadness and anger – are intended to help users better express their responses to posts. As *Wired* reported last week, advertisers are salivating at the prospect of additional data about consumer preferences and trends.

In the same way that Gmail and other Google services scrape the content of user emails and search results to generate targeted advertisements, the emojis will provide a new method to produce more detailed analyses of individual sentiments and preferences.

Law enforcement and intelligence agencies also will revel in the new trove of open source intelligence delivered by Facebook's new feature, which they will be able to mine for sentiment analysis of criminal and terrorism suspects.

A number of social media-scraping software programs used by federal and local law enforcement already mine Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media to determine networks of association, centers of influence and potential signs of radicalization. Two platforms –SocioSpyder and Dunami – are used by the FBI and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, respectively. These platforms use advanced text analytics tools to gauge potential conflicts and interpersonal or intergroup relations.

Think of each of the Facebook Reactions as a column in a spreadsheet that corresponds to emotion. Previously, open source intelligence-gathering programs would have to search and interpret large chunks of text for sentiment and account

for nuance and context. With the six new icons, determining emotion and sentiment through Facebook could now be exponentially simpler. Emojis already have found their way into the courts. Last year, a Brooklyn, New York, grand jury rejected charges against a teenage boy accused of threatening police with emojis he posted on Facebook.

For months, federal law enforcement has sought additional cooperation from Silicon Valley tech companies to help counter the use of social media by violent extremists such as the Islamic State group, which relies heavily on Twitter and other services to spread its message and recruit new followers. Earlier this week, federal officials met in San Jose with representatives from Google, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr and Microsoft to discuss how private firms can assist with the U.S. government's counterterrorism efforts.

The Obama administration's outreach to Silicon Valley comes at a time of tension, with the Department of Justice locked in a full-blown court battle with Apple over the FBI's demand to unlock an encrypted iPhone 5c that belonged to Syed Rizwan Farook, one of the San Bernardino shooters. While Facebook will submit a legal writ supporting Apple's stance, the company is far more receptive to assisting law enforcement than its peers in Cupertino. The new set of emojis were not developed for the sole purpose of aiding authorities, but they will be a welcome development to police and intelligence analysts alike.