



THE USC ANNENBERG NORMAN LEAR CENTER

MEDIA IMPACT PROJECT

OFFLINE IMPACT INDICATORS FOR DOCUMENTARY FILM



This guide can be used to collect information about the offline impact of a documentary film.

Read below to learn more about offline impact, the various ways data can be collected and to view the categories, types and subtypes of offline impact. There is also a glossary of relevant terms for your reference. You can explore the full guide below and send us questions and comments at media.impact@usc.edu.

This guide is based on a document that emerged from a workshop led by The Center for Investigative Reporting and the Media Impact Project at Columbia University's Tow Center for Digital Journalism in August 2014.

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View this guide online at
www.MediaImpactProject.org

What is offline impact?



What is offline impact?



“Offline impact” includes the critical signals of impact that often don't get counted when the focus is on digital audience data. Examples of offline impact could be a letter from a viewer, a mention in a news article, or a screening by a lawmaker.

In order to generate a systematic recording of offline impact, we have proposed a classification system, or a typology, which may feel constrictive, but the advantage is that it allows filmmakers to present clear evidence that their film has

- had an impact on individual viewers.
- affected groups or organizations that utilized the film.
- made advances toward, or achieved, structural change in a society.

The system outlined here will allow users to categorize these singular instances of impact in a structured way so that filmmakers and organizations can better measure the impact of their work, set benchmarks, compare data and share best practices.

Email questions and comments to media.impact@usc.edu.

How do we measure offline impact?



How do we measure offline impact?

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

There are many different methods to collect information about offline impact; this list includes some of the most commonly used.

Analytics

Case study

Content analysis

Direct audience feedback

Experimental research

Field observation

Focus groups

Interviews

Legal records analysis

News analysis

Policy analysis

Self-report by organization

Survey

Voting data analysis

The system that we propose here is optimized for singular examples of offline impact and so we recommend that survey data, which may report changes in a large number of individuals, should not be collected in this format.

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What are the different kinds of offline impact?



What are the different kinds of offline impact?

Classification of Offline Impact Indicators

	MICRO	MESO	MACRO	MEDIA
AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness Increased knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness
ATTITUDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude changed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude changed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude changed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage changed Coverage increased
BEHAVIOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplified the film's message Lifestyle changed Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement) Shared information Volunteered Donated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplified the film's message Shared information Took collective action Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement) Built a new or stronger coalition Changed organizational priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplified the film's message Shared information Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement) Changed institutional priorities Changed rules/laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amplified the film's message Collaborated with filmmaker or related organization Discovered or shared information Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement) Received award Changed the larger media agenda

What are the different kinds of offline impact?



Each example of offline impact falls into one of four categories:

MICRO

Changes that happen to **individual** viewers of the film



MESO

The impact the film had on a **group**, such as a local community organization, a neighborhood, or any other organized cohort



MACRO

The impact the film had on a powerful **institution**, such as a government agency or major corporation, which can result in structural changes



MEDIA

How the media responded to the film



Within all four categories there are three basic **types** of offline impact:

- **Awareness:** Exposure to the film led to increased awareness of an issue and possibly increased knowledge about it.
- **Attitude:** Exposure to the film led to a shift in attitude about the issue.
- **Behavior:** Exposure to the film led to a change in behavior.

Additionally, there are several **subtypes** of offline impact that are specific to each category and involve changes in awareness, attitudes and behaviors.

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How do we talk about offline impact?



Offline Impact Indicators Glossary

KEY: **Categories** **Types** **Subtypes** **Methods**

[Click here to view terms by color-coded group](#)

Amplification (media): Media response to the film increases its reach, amplifying the film's message and giving it an extended life. Manifestations may include related stories, localized stories or editorials. There is significant evidence that extended coverage of issues in media can influence political agendas and public opinion.

Amplification (micro, meso, macro): Individuals, groups and institutions amplify the message of the film by commenting on it in public or private fora. Holding screenings of the film for select audiences is a typical example.

Attitude: Through exposure to the film, an individual viewer's or a group's attitude about an issue changes. For example, the group or the individual may feel more/less empowered, more/less tolerant, etc.

Awards: The filmmaker or a media organization earns awards for the film or for coverage of issues raised by the film.

Awareness: Through exposure to content, whether primary or secondary, an individual's or a group's level of awareness of an issue increases. Awareness is often measured with surveys. A film viewer may also contact the filmmaker directly, stating that his or her awareness of an issue increased.

Behavior: Through exposure to content, the behavior of an individual, group or institution may change. Changes in individual viewer's behavior are often measured through survey research. There are nearly limitless specific examples of behavior change; the subtypes listed here attempt to cover the bulk of them.

Case study: In the social sciences, a case study is a descriptive analysis of a person, group or event. The inquiry is usually highly structured and it investigates a topic within a real-life context.

Civic engagement: This can occur within all categories. An individual viewer may engage in civic life in a new or more robust manner. This might register in voting behavior, joining a political party or movement, or participating in a protest. For groups, civic engagement includes publicly pressuring elected officials, influencing a political agenda or filing lawsuits. For major institutions, including government agencies, this includes official public statements, citations during hearings, calls for investigations, imposing sanctions or penalties, firing officials and taking all manner of legal and legislative actions.

Coalition creation: The film encourages existing groups or individuals not previously connected to come together to form groups or networks for taking action.

Collaboration (media): Media request to work with the filmmaker or related organizations on similar or related stories.

Collective action: Groups or networks of individuals (pre-existing or newly formed) respond to content and act in a concerted fashion, including organizing protests or holding community meetings.

Content analysis: In the social sciences, content analysis is the analysis of writing, images or recordings in order to understand "Who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect."

Direct audience feedback: A consumer of content responds to the filmmaker directly, stating that his or her attitude or behavior shifted with respect to an issue.

Donating: A viewer contributes resources to the filmmaker or to a nonprofit or advocacy group addressing the issue.

Experimental research: An experiment is an orderly, repeatable procedure with the goal of verifying, refuting or establishing a hypothesis. Controlled experiments help determine cause-and-effect by manipulating particular factors (such as exposure to a film).

How do we talk about offline impact?



Field observation: Field observation is the collection of information outside of an artificial setting, such as a laboratory or research setting. Often the researcher is recording observations about subjects interacting with one another or their environments.

Focus groups: In a focus group, a small group of people are asked about their awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behavior related to a particular subject.

Information sharing: Whistle blowers, media organizations, or other kinds of groups or institutions gather and share information in response to the film.

Interviews: A conversation between two or more people, often about the subject's awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behavior related to a particular subject.

Knowledge: Exposure to content can lead to increased knowledge. A quiz in a survey can reveal whether viewers learned things from the film.

Legal records analysis: A specific type of content analysis that focuses exclusively on legal records (see *content analysis*).

Lifestyle change: A viewer changes some aspect of his or her personal life, perhaps by spending time or money in different ways. This might include exercising more or buying different products.

Macro: The impact the film had on a powerful institution, such as a government agency or a major corporation, which can result in structural changes.

Media: How the media responded to the film (see *media agenda*).

Media agenda: The quality and/or quantity of media response to the film has a measureable impact on the news cycle. This is often discovered through rigorous analysis of large datasets of news content (see *media*, *news analysis* and *content analysis*).

Meso: Changes that happen at the level of a group as a result of the documentary film or its campaign.

Micro: Changes that happen to individuals as a result of their exposure to the film and/or the film's campaign. This could include an individual who was involved with the film's production, as a subject, for instance.

News analysis: A specific type of content analysis that focuses exclusively on news content (see *content analysis*).

Policy analysis: Policy analysis usually involves studying various policies in order to figure out the most likely outcomes from different types of implementation.

Priority shift: An organization, such as an advocacy group or a nongovernmental organization (NGO), changes priorities in response to the film.

Self-report by organization: Like *direct audience feedback*, an organization responds to the filmmaker directly, stating that the group's position on an issue has changed due to the film.

Survey: Survey research usually involves a questionnaire distributed to a specific population of people in order to determine their awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behavior related to a particular subject.

Volunteering: A viewer volunteers for an organization.

Voting data analysis: A specific type of content analysis that focuses exclusively on voting data (see *content analysis*).

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How do we talk about offline impact?



Offline Impact Indicators Glossary - By Color-Coded Group

Categories

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Types

Attitude: Through exposure to the film, an individual viewer's or a group's attitude about an issue changes. For example, the group or the individual may feel more/less empowered, more/less tolerant, etc.

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Subtypes

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Micro impact



Micro impact: Changes that happen to individual viewers of the film.

AWARENESS



- Increased awareness
- Increased knowledge

ATTITUDE



- Attitude changed

BEHAVIOR



- Amplified the film's message
- Lifestyle changed
- Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement)
- Shared information
- Volunteered
- Donated

Example: *Food, Inc.*

Synopsis

Food, Inc., is an Oscar-nominated documentary film by Robert Kenner that was released in the United States in 2010. In the film, Kenner lifts the veil on the United States' food industry, exposing the highly mechanized underbelly that's been hidden from the American consumer with the consent of the government's regulatory agencies. The film reveals surprising - and often shocking truths - about what Americans eat, how food is produced, and how this has impacted the nation as a whole as well as its future.

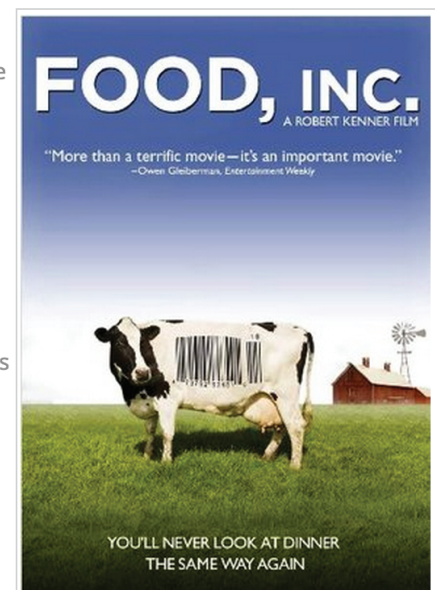
Campaign Goals

The film sought to educate audiences about some of the hidden truths about the American food industry and to empower individuals to use this knowledge to make more ethical choices about what they eat.

Evidence of Micro Impact

Using an innovative survey instrument developed by the Lear Center, the study of more than 20,000 people found that those who saw *Food, Inc.* had significantly changed their eating and food shopping habits.

- *Food, Inc.* viewers compared to non-viewers were significantly more likely to:
 - encourage their friends, family & colleagues to learn more about food safety
 - shop at their local farmers market, eat healthy food
 - consistently buy organic or sustainable food.



Micro impact



- *Food, Inc.* viewers had a significantly higher likelihood to contribute time or money to support organized efforts around:
 - improving the treatment of animals in the food industry
 - improving food and drinks served in schools
 - passing legislation that improves food safety
 - passing legislation that offers fair wages and job protection to farm workers and food processors

Learn more about the outcomes of this research here: <http://learcenter.org/project/foodinc/>

A full-report of research findings will be available on the Media Impact Project's website late summer 2015.

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Meso impact



Meso impact: The impact the film had on a group, such as a local community organization, a neighborhood, or any other organized cohort.

- AWARENESS** ➤
 - Increased awareness
- ATTITUDE** ➤
 - Attitude changed
- BEHAVIOR** ➤
 - Amplified the film's message
 - Shared information
 - Took collective action
 - Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement)
 - Built a new or stronger coalition
 - Changed organizational priorities

Example: *American Promise*

Synopsis

A film thirteen years in the making, *American Promise* follows the stories of two families who enroll their sons at a prestigious New York City prep school. *American Promise* provides a rarely seen look into the lives of two middle class black families who grapple with issues of race, class, gender and education as they push their children toward success.

Campaign Goals

The filmmakers aimed to close the black male achievement gap in education by fostering support for parents and caregivers of African American boys who often went without recognition of their experiences. They also hoped to encourage deeper cultural sensitivity among educators by creating and disseminating *American Promise's* campaign tools into diversity and professional development training.

Evidence of Meso Impact

- The film's viewing and accompanying campaign resulted in a large number of micro-conversations on racial equity that have linked parents, caregivers, educators, and advocates. The campaign strengthened existing relationships between organizations working on related issues and generated new partnerships.
- *American Promise* and its campaign materials have become part of the everyday work of many local and national organizations. For example:





Meso impact



- American Promise and its campaign materials have become part of the everyday work of many local and national organizations. For example:
 - An estimated 14,000 educators are now actively using the film's Professional Development Curriculum to support the socioemotional and economic growth of black boys.
 - A total of 53 Promise Clubs, self-run advocacy groups, have been formed to help foster greater collaboration and problem solving among parents of black boys.

For more information the American Promise's impact, read the [Britdoc Impact Awards report](#).

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Macro impact



Macro impact: The impact the film had on a powerful institution, such as a government agency or major corporation

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| AWARENESS | ➤ | • Increased awareness |
| ATTITUDE | ➤ | • Attitude changed |
| BEHAVIOR | ➤ | • Amplified the film's message
• Shared information
• Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement)
• Changed institutional priorities
• Changed rules/laws |

Example: *Blackfish*

Synopsis

Blackfish centers on the story of Tilikum, a performing killer whale, whose many years of captivity resulted in the death of three people. *Blackfish* combines shocking footage of killer whales' lives in captivity, expert testimonies and emotional interviews with trainers who were witness to the beauty of these fellow mammals as well as the underbelly of the multi-billion dollar sea-park industry.

Campaign Goals

The filmmakers' sought to create mass public awareness and understanding about the consequences of breeding whales in captivity and influence SeaWorld to change some of its harmful policies.

Evidence of Macro Impact

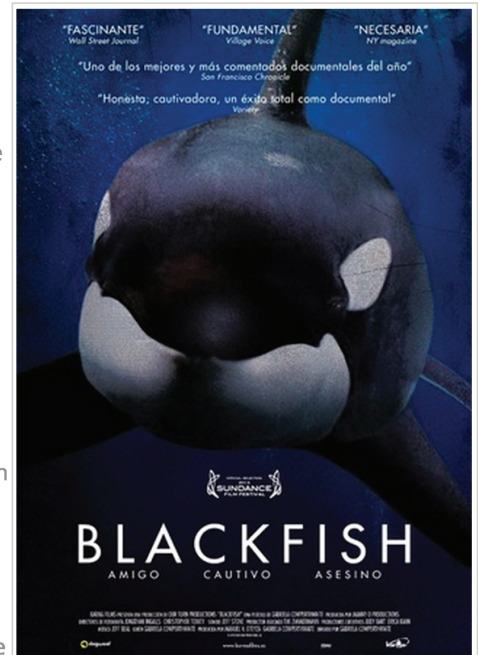
- *Blackfish* had great success at motivating individuals and organizations to action, with the public response to the film slowly translating into behavior change on the part of corporations. The impact on SeaWorld, its bottom line and its reputation was undeniable.

- In April 2014 SeaWorld reported a 13% drop in attendance. By August 2014 shares had fallen by 37% since the IPO. Financial observers attribute these declines to the negative publicity stirred up by *Blackfish*.

- In August 2014, SeaWorld announced their first initiative responding to what became known as the "*Blackfish* Effect": that it will build new, larger environments at its theme parks and will fund additional research on orcas, along with programs to protect ocean health and whales in the wild.

For more information on the "*Blackfish* Effect" and the film's corporate impact, read the [Britdoc Impact Awards report](#).

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Media impact



Media impact: How the media responded to the film

- | | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| AWARENESS | ➤ | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coverage appeared |
| ATTITUDE | ➤ | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coverage changed• Coverage increased |
| BEHAVIOR | ➤ | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amplified the film's message• Collaborated with filmmaker or related organizations• Discovered and shared information• Engaged in a legal/political process (civic engagement)• Received award• Changed the larger media agenda |

Example: *No Fire Zone*

Synopsis

No Fire Zone outlines the final months of the 26-year Sri Lankan civil war during which between 40,000 and 70,000 civilians were brutally killed. The film uses powerful testimonies and video evidence to show how the government committed war crimes through systematically targeting and torturing thousands of its civilians.

Campaign Goals

The film sought to bring worldwide attention to war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the 26-year Sri Lankan civil war and to make the government accountable for its actions.

Evidence of Media Impact

- The *No Fire Zone* team used a strategy of generating media publicity about the film to drive their campaign. Screenings, media and advocacy campaigns made the front pages and primetime television with over 150 major news stories and dozens of interviews during the week following the film's February 2013 launch.
- The hashtag #NoFireZone was used extensively and at one point during the UK's Channel 4 airing, the hashtag trended at no.1 in the UK.
- The media campaign was supported by continuous journalistic coverage on the part of the filmmakers, who continually updated the story and provided further insights and revelations at critical points in the campaign.

For more information *No Fire Zone's* widespread impact, read the [Britdoc Impact Awards report](#).

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