



pointofview

Side-by-Side Intelligence: The Power of Social Data in Managing Brand Equity

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GAME CHANGERS



Ipsos has been conducting social listening for the last ten years. While it has always been our position that social data is not representative enough to displace traditional survey-based research entirely, we have also believed that it plays an essential role in consumer understanding. Social data helps us to see category trends, unmet needs, and emerging topics that may otherwise remain undiscovered in conventional survey-based data. And by applying proven analytic frameworks to this data we have elevated social listening to social intelligence to help our clients address questions around innovation, brand health, digital communications, and path to purchase.

Since the inception of Ipsos Social Media Exchange (Ipsos' dedicated social media practice) we have been focused on ways to structure and harmonize social data to make it even more relevant, digestible, timely, and affordable for clients. More specifically, we have been focused on harmonizing social data with survey-based data to allow a hybrid blend that optimizes costs and improves the speed of insight. We call this "side-by-side intelligence." It allows us to apply social media insights to support several areas of discovery such as generating new insights for innovation, for creative development, and for market structure.

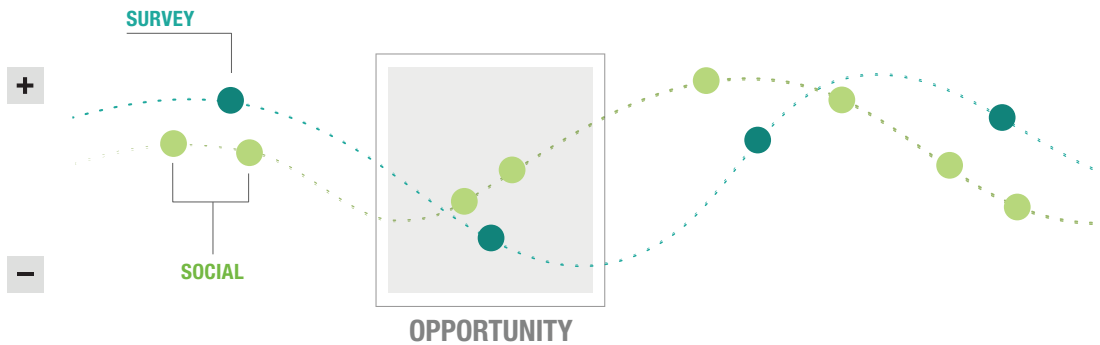
The Power of Social Data in Managing Brand Equity

For most established brands, **brand equity does not change quickly**. It is in this fact that we have two challenges: (1) many of our clients are questioning the value of tracking brand equity quite as frequently, especially when it is costly, slow to report and backwards looking, and (2) clients looking to social media data to act as a replacement for survey-based tracking are discovering that social data does not correlate with survey data or tie to in-market performance.

It is important to understand that social data and survey data come from very different sources and that they are not intended to align. While you can over-fit the social data to align to already-known business measure like sales, there is little value in such as the data cannot be predictive more than one or two weeks.

Therefore, we prefer to use social media data to explore the insights **underneath** the overall periodic brand equity numbers. The survey data provides the benchmarks and reliable representative insights, while the social data tracks meaningful changes in the **drivers** of equity over time. We can generate insight by passing the changes observed in social data through the survey-based driver analysis.

SIDE-BY-SIDE EQUITY MODEL



The Structuring of Social Data for BHT

The structure we have adopted leverages learning from our survey-based brand equity models. We then set up the framework for coding social data to align with the measures and drivers of the brand's equity from the survey based equity deep-dive (e.g. aligning measures like our "Attitudinal Equity," "Market Effects," "Equity Diagnostic Framework," and "Emotional Mapping," along with the options for bespoke imagery, personality, and profile coding reflecting our clients' specific markets).

This type of alignment between the survey-data driver analysis with the social media findings gives a relevant structure to the social data for what matters to the brand. This creates a process that is fast and consistent across markets for comparison and scalability. It circumvents the costs of re-inventing the wheel for each new social media study, and also provides a structure of insights that aligns with what our clients are more familiar with – looking through the lens of survey-based feedback, with greater control and representation of the target.

Side-by-Side Intelligence

This side-by-side intelligence boosts brand health trackers by using both sources of insight to deliver faster, more affordable brand guidance that is scalable and backstopped with representative survey-based insights. By taking social analysis beyond volume and sentiment and coding it to validated frameworks (ours or the client's), we are adding value to social media data by making it more actionable and strategic.

Together, Brand Health Tracking and Social Intelligence are ushering in a new era of brand equity programs, providing dynamic, fast, and contextually rich insight, to help unlock our understanding of consumer perceptions and brand associations like never before.

Focus on the Deltas: The Real Power of Social

We know that social data does not always easily align with or replace the reliability of survey-based insights. So, if this is the case, what in fact is the right use of social data in this context? We feel it is to focus on the changes in trends over time. That is, focus on the deltas found through social listening. It's fine that social data is not fully representative and not "equal" to survey data, as long as we are consistent in our social structure and "sample frame." We want social data to tell us something new and different. When we track the deltas of the coded social listening data, we can fill the gaps between survey waves, anticipate trends, and uncover new insights unattainable with traditional research alone. We can also arm our clients with actionable early warning data, so they can make smarter decisions at the speed of the consumer.

Last autumn, we noticed a sudden and significant boost in one of the key equity attributes we were tracking for a leading FMCG client in social. The "consumer value" measure unexpectedly skyrocketed, leaving us wondering if it could tell us a story that the relatively steady KPI's from the survey tracker (which were in fact showing a downward trend) could not. After further examination, we realized that the increase in positive equity in the social data was in fact the result of a significant lift in mentions correlating with those of a private label competitor. During the period in question, social mentions that included both brands in a single comment tripled in volume, as a result of heavy competitor trial fueled by aggressive campaigns and discounts.

In a matter of hours we were able to see that consumers felt the competitive brand consistently delivered far below their expectations in various aspects of quality. In a similar breath, these same consumers were also reiterating their support and praise for our client's product, the category leader and first choice for most.

Only through the side-by-side comparison between social and survey data were we able to identify a discrepancy that ultimately revealed otherwise hidden market dynamics. In isolation, the social data alone would have suggested the brand was doing just fine. And the survey data alone didn't pick up the subtle dynamics that could very well have a lasting impact on the brand's innovation and communications efforts.

Conclusion

In the new normal, a world where people express and consume a constant stream of online content that is known to influence purchasing decisions, our clients need fast, reliable, easily digestible business intelligence more than ever before. And, on the other hand, we need to know if or how to react to social buzz by referencing the representative survey-based insights (which have been validated to actual sales). Side-by-side intelligence delivers on both these promises.