

## Brand perception

Not for the first time, the setup for this post involves heralding the rise of social media and the opportunities it now presents. It's fast-becoming a cliché, but that doesn't mean it's not true.

Indeed, it rings no truer than when considering branding.

Customer opinion is more significant than ever in determining brand perceptions. The consequence of this is that we must first understand what those opinions really are – what do consumers really think about you, your products and services? How does this compare to your competitors and the wider market?

### **What even is a brand?**

People have different ideas of what the word “brand” means. To some a brand is a logo, to others a slogan, and to others it represents the people, products, or services of a company they see in the media.

Heavyweight social media overlords Brian Solis and Chris Brogan have cemented the idea that it is simply a mental creation to help users understand one company/product/service/industry over another, and ultimately a culmination of shared experiences.

When you consider that the past five years has seen nothing but dramatic increase in sharing, or at least the avenues to do so, the opportunity that is now presented is obvious.

### **Understand before acting**

While marketing managers and brand owners may believe they have a very strong understanding of what their brand is, it may not be accurate.

They certainly may have a good grasp of what their brand means to *them*, how it is positioned and what the message is supposed to be.

However, the public perception may not correlate to this vision. As we all know, perception is reality, so whatever people are thinking about and saying about your brand, *is your brand*.

It's a good idea to embark upon a bit of research about how people perceive your brand, most easily through the use of a [social media monitoring](#) tool. It's a good idea to ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your share of voice vary over time/ across regions/different types of social media?
- What is your brand's share of voice compared to competitors?
- Which of your products is most talked about?
- What is the overall sentiment towards your brand?
- How does sentiment about your brand change over time?
- What has caused spikes in conversation about your brand?
- What are the top topics talked about in relation to your brand?
- What do people like most about your brand or your products?

## **Monitoring**

Social listening can reveal the answers to these questions, and provide more to boot. In [the eBook](#), we explain how important it is to understand the differences between the perception of your services and the perception of your brand, and focus on some case studies to illustrate this point.

Once you've worked out what the perception is, and what you'd like the perception to be, it's time to act on your findings; time to make your brand social. Social forms of brand publicity result in people being seven times more likely to spend or consume, when compared to branding through PR or TV.

According to one study, social media is responsible for the largest shift in brand reception, out of 20 channels analysed, meaning the easiest way to change what people think of your brand is through social practices.

Despite this, just 24% of those surveyed claimed they were exposed to social forms of branding, whereas around 69% were exposed to TV-promoted branding. It doesn't take much working out to discover the massive opportunities that lots of companies are missing out on.

It's time to re-evaluate how you shape your branding. It's time to get social.