



brandwatch

Case Study/ **Walmart**

How Walmart makes use
of social analytics, now
and in the future



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At a glance/ Walmart

Background

According to the Fortune Global 500 list, Walmart is the world's largest company by revenue as well as the biggest private employer in the world with 2.2 million employees.

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. helps people around the world save money and live better in retail stores, online, and through their mobile devices. Each week, nearly 260 million customers and members visit nearly 11,600 stores under 72 banners in 28 countries and e-commerce websites in 11 countries and with fiscal year 2015 revenue of \$485.7 billion.

Walmart continues to be a leader in sustainability, corporate philanthropy and employment opportunity.



260 million

CUSTOMERS AND MEMBERS



11,600

STORES UNDER 72 BANNERS



\$485.7 billion

FISCAL YEAR 2015 REVENUE

Introduction to social analytics at Walmart

Walmart is in the process of building out an insights and advocacy program, starting from scratch. As a forward-thinking organization, it is starting with the technology and building the program out from there, spanning across multiple disciplines and departments.

Walmart is also expanding into different areas such as global security and corporate strategy, and scaling the new technologies that it has brought into these areas, and new ways of looking at open-source intelligence and various other intelligence streams.

In this case study we speak with Chandler Wilson, Director of Analytics and Insights at Walmart. Chandler's role is to identify new technology and intelligence streams, and then to scale them in an elegant way across the Walmart organization. These new technologies help redefine how Walmart depict its overall vision.

How Walmart combats enterprise level challenges

As the largest company in the world you'd perhaps think Walmart had very few challenges when it comes to the use of social intelligence, but it is the organization's sheer size that sometimes poses the biggest challenge.

Walmart has invested in the right technology and the right people to draw useful insights, and their biggest challenge now is the ability to consume the insights Chandler and his team uncover. The size of the organization, made up of many, many different units and departments, results in it being difficult to ensure the insights are understood and used around the organization.

"Ours is very much a big department within itself, and navigating around our internal communications can be difficult - being dynamic enough is certainly a challenge," said Wilson.

Central to this challenge is something Wilson notices internally. Ultimately, it is the clash between analytics natives versus non-analytics natives. There is a stark contrast in the capabilities between the two and it can be hard to compete if you're new to working with and interpreting data. When it comes to social analytics it can be hard for some to learn to trust the data.

"Because I don't know any other way to do things. I only know analytics. I don't know what it is like to really be an expert without analytics"

CHANDLER WILSON, DIRECTOR OF ANALYTICS & INSIGHTS, WALMART.

What Walmart did ...

Walmart uses social analytics to spot emerging trends in public affairs.

How analytics bucks the trends

Looking specifically at public affairs, by using social analytics Walmart has the ability to spot emerging trends in certain policy domains. The challenge Chandler has is proving to his non-analytics colleagues how or where the connections are.

"There have been instances where I have pointed out that something is going to be an issue, highlighting that something is connected and some people have simply said 'this is crazy, there's no way', but I am looking at all the different perspectives, therefore know what I am looking at is less biased." said Wilson.

Social analytics is the perfect way of crowdsourcing information. By synthesizing social data businesses are not looking for anything specific, it is unbiased and therefore usually cleaner information.

There's a stark contrast in the quality of decisions that can be made when using analytics versus not using analytics, but Wilson believes it is important not to get too caught up in data too.

Although often so valuable, he notes that people can worry about data as well, and what it might be saying.

"You want to try to get people to do the human things and not worry so much about the data. A lot of people start to get worried about the data."

CHANDLER WILSON, DIRECTOR OF ANALYTICS & INSIGHTS, WALMART.

"They start to feel like the machines are taking over! So the culture we're trying to foster is 'hey, this allows you to be more human, not be a number-crunching machine'. The idea is to get people moving away from those things that you thought were expertise, and towards the things that computers can't do," said Wilson.

Encouraging people and getting the culture to move in the direction of focusing on the information gathering is a challenge Chandler sees, that is why his role of identifying new technology and intelligence streams is so vital.

Combining and distributing insights

Social analytics is one of many data sets Walmart analyzes. Combining data sets and distributing the insights often goes as high up to the CEO, Doug McMillon.

The analytics and insights team is analyzing and looking at data in a way that no other area in the business at Walmart is. Using social data for competitive intelligence has been a recent success for the team, and has indicated to the team what could be emerging issues.

"We're creating networks from key themes and key people, and then we're contrasting that with economic and back-side data to try to come up with a high resolution strategy."

Before it had been difficult for Chandler and his team to understand or have the resources to ascertain what was social intelligence and what was people's opinion. Now Walmart has the ability and the technological power.

"It's not a huge \$10 million project anymore. The costs are now maybe \$2 million or \$3 million in that regard."

Visual listening - making social data visible and actionable

Chandler's team recently secured budget to install a social analytics command center in their Arkansas HQ. **Brandwatch Vizia** will allow anyone within the Walmart HQ to get familiar with analytics in an easy to understand and visually appealing way.

Vizia provides the perfect opportunity for Chandler and his team to demonstrate the power analytics has and help drive forward change in the organization.

What Walmart did ...

Insights found from social analytics, as well as other data sets, are combined and the results often goes as high up as the CEO, Doug McMillon.

Pioneering use cases for social intelligence

There are of course multiple advantages to being the biggest company in the world. The size of the organization puts Walmart in a very unique position.

Walmart has considerable power and a huge voice across the social landscape. Walmart very publicly disagreed with the Governor of Arkansas HB 1228. Walmart, along with other organizations, asked the Governor to reconsider the bill, which would allow businesses and employers to discriminate against employees.

In early 2015 Walmart announced it was raising the minimum wage they paid employees to higher than the federal minimum wage. Following the announcement, Walmart conducted some advanced analytical commentary and found a connection between the announcement and global currency markets. Walmart was therefore able to link their announcement to commodities markets and some of the interest rates that potentially were going to be hiked.

“From Walmart’s point of view it’s amazing that we can just affect things such as this”

CHANDLER WILSON,
DIRECTOR OF ANALYTICS & INSIGHTS, WALMART.

Using social analytics Walmart could understand the reaction to this news. Walmart had the ability to listen to how the announcement was being received across global news channels, social networks and the wider digital web.

What Walmart did ...

Walmart used social analytics to observe the reaction to their minimum wage announcement, to understand how it was perceived across news and social networks around the globe.

Investing in the future

The more data Walmart has available, the more the organization has realized that data can affect everything. Walmart is determined to learn holistically how to tackle a business strategy that involves multiple different, yet connected departments such as communication, marketing and supply chain.

With tools like **Brandwatch**, Walmart is confident it has the technology power that will help the company to break down its silos and start sharing data and insights, and really look at internal processes and how to maximize them.

“If we find an insight in one area the idea would be then to have a seat at the table to act on that. Right now companies' insight units are typically so far away from the decision and they usually don't have any decision-making without authority, to leverage the insight and that's going to have to change,” said Wilson.

Working with future tech

The application of social intelligence doesn't always have to be the most thought out, perfect decision. However, having the framework to allow people to use social intelligence and act on it is significant.

Of course social analytics is just one information stream, but it is an area where Walmart is receiving significant investment. Currently the organization is looking into emotional modeling to identify global open-source trends. Walmart is using the term 'open-source intelligence' not 'social intelligence' as the term reflects the more sophisticated nature of the data.

“I'm 100% confident that companies that don't start creating interdisciplinary units that are ambiguous towards the problem and ambiguous towards the data set to solve problems, aren't going to continue to succeed” ends Wilson.

What Walmart did ...

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About

Brandwatch

Brandwatch is the world's leading social intelligence company. Brandwatch Analytics and Vizia products fuel smarter decision making around the world.

The Brandwatch Analytics platform gathers millions of online conversations every day and provides users with the tools to analyze them, empowering the world's most admired brands and agencies to make insightful, data-driven business decisions. Vizia distributes visually-engaging insights to the physical places where the action happens.

The Brandwatch platform, ranked highest in customer satisfaction by G2Crowd in the Winter 2016 social media monitoring report, is used by over 1,200 brands and agencies, including Cisco, Whirlpool, British Airways, Sony Music, and Dell.

Brandwatch continues on its impressive business trajectory, with more than 50 percent of revenues now from North America.

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Brandwatch. Now You Know.

Walmart

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