



# Consumer Insights

How brands can use social data to understand consumer trends and preferences



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# Introduction

It’s essential for brands to understand how consumers feel in order to make the right decisions about launching campaigns, reaching new audiences, and curating their brand image. But consumer preferences are constantly changing. By the time a brand understands what consumers want, their opinions have already changed.

There is an endless amount of questions about consumers that brands would like to answer. The questions can be incredibly broad—how consumer opinion about food has changed—or quite specific—which smartphone release has gotten the most buzz.

Luckily, social media data offers a real-time window into the mind of the consumer. This allows brands to track consumer preferences dynamically and uncover the most relevant insights.

In this guide, we’ll explore the importance of consumer insights from social media by looking at three main examples:

- Red meat consumption
- iPhone launch reactions
- Self-driving car options

These examples showcase how any brand can identify consumer insights no matter what industry or market they are in.

# What are people saying?

Consumer insights give businesses a competitive advantage for several reasons. They allow brands to understand what consumers want, how they feel, and ultimately when and why they decide to make purchases. Understanding these things allow brands to make the right strategic decisions to engage and delight consumers with products and services that they love, want, and purchase.

But where should brands start when trying to understand what consumers want?

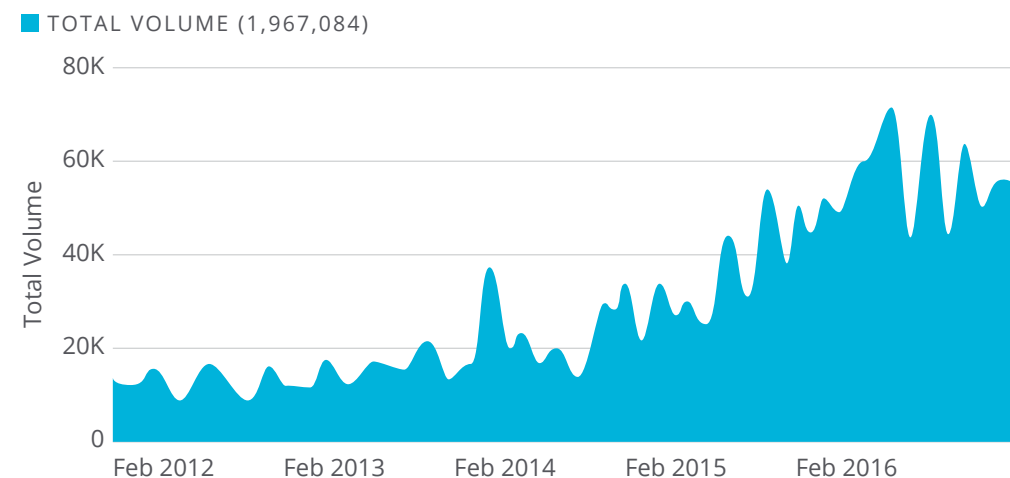
The best place to start when seeking to uncover consumer insights is to understand what people are saying about a topic relevant to your business. This could be the conversation around a topic as wide as “red meat” or as narrow as discussion around a particular iPhone model.

## SELF-DRIVING CARS

### Fear and anger on the rise

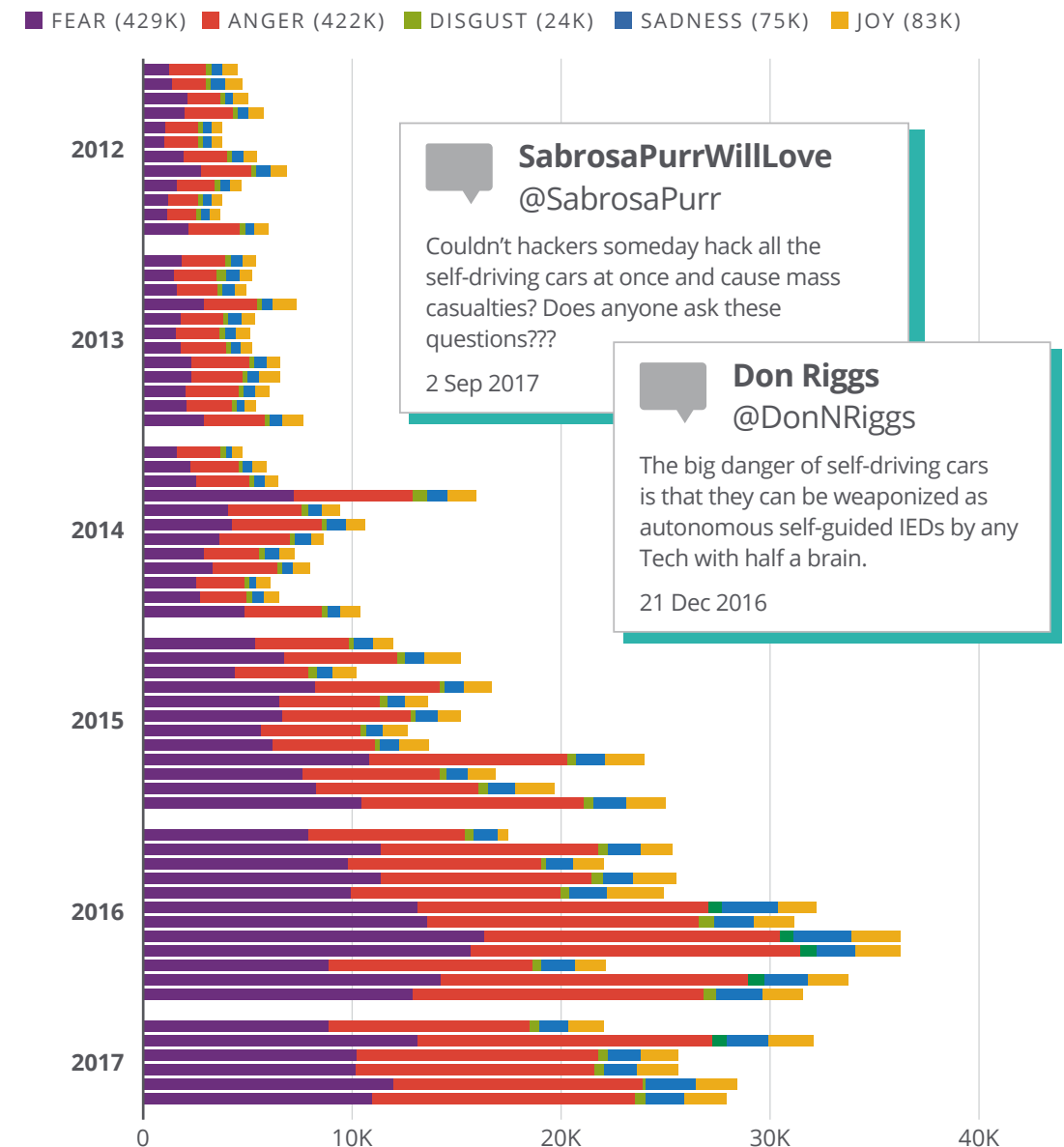
For automakers, it's becoming clear that the future of self-driving cars is closer than we might have thought a few years ago. That means it's extremely important for these brands to understand how consumers are feeling about this new technology.

Self-Driving Cars Discussion Volume (2012-2017)



Understandably, conversation about self-driving cars has increased drastically since 2012. What's interesting is that the conversation across Facebook and Twitter is becoming more and more negative as volume increases. Many have expressed fear and anger about the potential risks of self-driving cars from safety concerns to economic issues like the loss of driving jobs. As an automaker poised to invest millions in the development of self-driving vehicles, this might be a bit alarming.

Self-Driving Cars Emotion Volume (2012-2017)

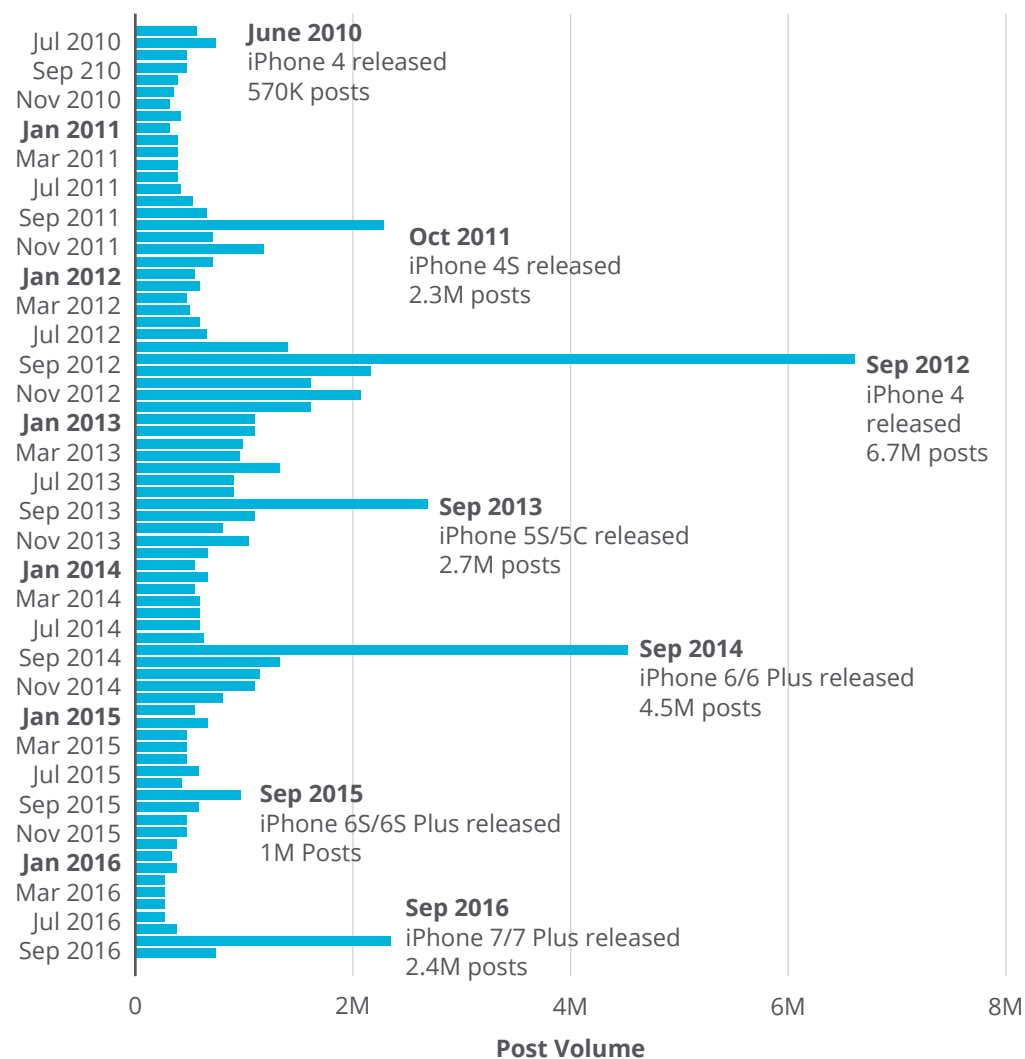


## IPHONES

### Reduced excitement for new releases

The iPhone stands out as one of the most revolutionary consumer products of the century so far. But are the latest iterations of the iPhone still creating the same excitement that they used to? As consumer preferences that impact buying decisions are constantly changing, is it possible for the iPhone to remain consumers' favorite smartphone? Looking at the the iPhone release conversation since 2010, we can see that volume peaked with the iPhone 5 back in September 2012.

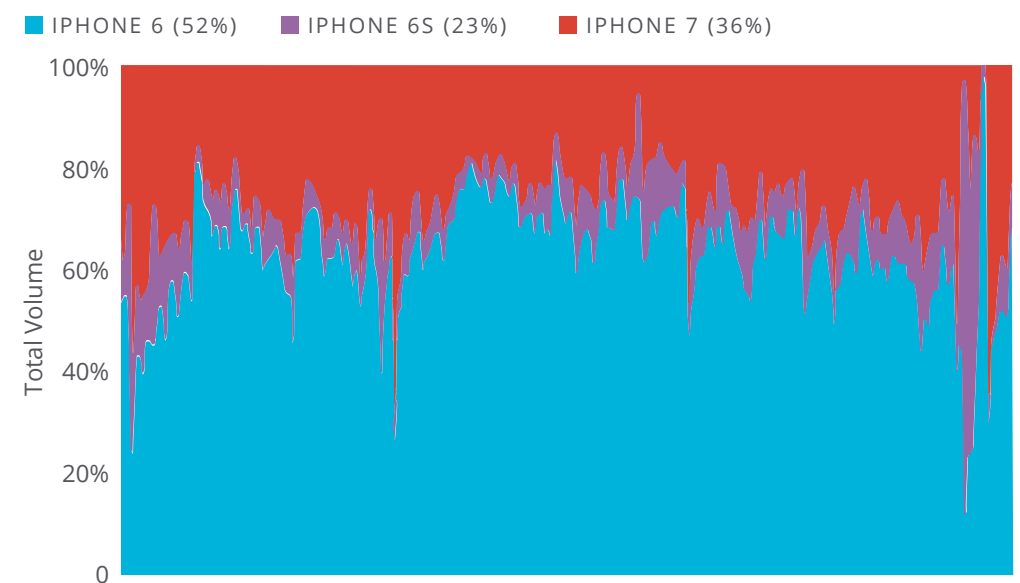
#### iPhone Releases: Conversation Volume Trends



The last release to even come close to reaching the same level of conversation volume was the iPhone 6. Looking specifically at the last three iPhone releases (the 6, 6s, and 7), we see that the iPhone 6 dominated in terms of both conversation volume and intent to purchase.

While size was not the main reason the majority of social media users mentioned for buying, it appears to have played a major factor compared to the iPhone 6s and 7. The iPhone 6 was the first model that Apple offered in Plus size and immediately this was reflected in the volume and topic of conversation.

#### Purchase Intent: iPhone 6, 6s, and 7



**Gweksta**  
@TheBlackIntern

getting the iPhone 6 is worth it just for the bigger screen for Netflix

13 Oct 2015

**A Piece of Viola**  
@violahelen\_

Absolutely HATE that the iPhone 7 doesn't have a normal headphone jack. Means I can't use the flight ones 🙄

25 Aug 2017



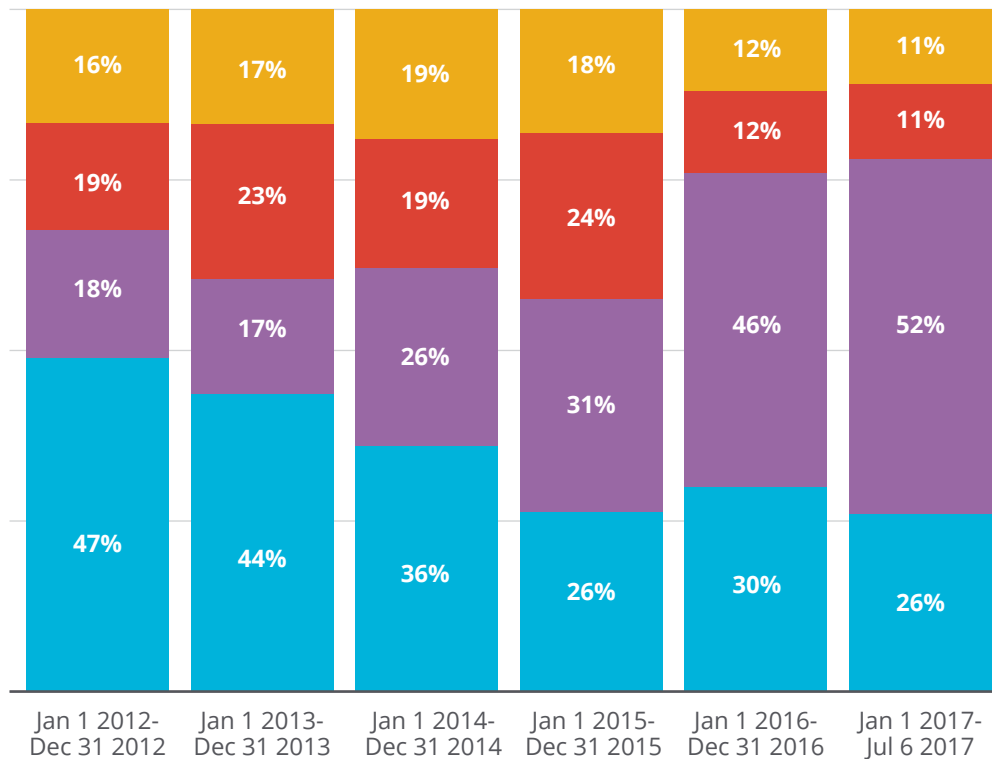
## RED MEAT

### Consumers are eating less than before

Whether your business sells food directly or touches the food industry in a slightly less direct method, knowing how consumers feel about a staple food should matter. Like other major topics, analyzing consumer opinion about red meat can help us better understand the larger trends shaping consumer conversations.

#### Opinion Analysis on Red Meat Consumption

■ EAT RED MEAT ■ SOMETIMES EAT  
■ AVOID/PLAN TO STOP ■ MENTION RECALL/STUDY



In 2012, 47% of consumers discussing red meat identified as regular red meat eaters. In 2017 that percentage fell to 26%. Interestingly, the percentage of people who talk about occasionally eating red meat has risen from 18% in 2012 to 52% in 2017. This suggests that, while red meat consumption is on the decline, most consumers still choose to eat it occasionally instead of giving it up entirely.

On social media, the majority of people discussing red meat have a negative disposition towards the consumption of red meat and many have expressed disgust towards it.



**Jess**

@valeskajerome

this is a lie I actually stopped eating red meat the only meat I eat is chicken and at time I eat turkey

31 Aug 2017



**egg head**

@obviouslyamodel

After today I don't think I can ever eat red meat again

31 Aug 2017



**kiera**

@VIIXVII

I wanna go vegan just for the health benefits but I LOVE STEAK 🍖

28 Aug 2017

## Who's saying it?

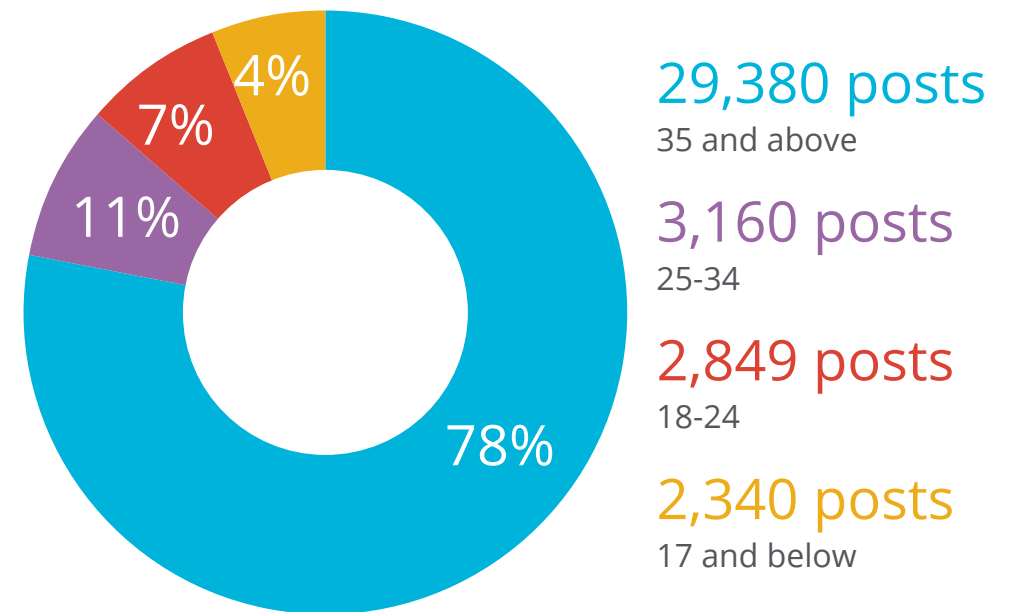
Understanding who's doing the talking is equally important to what's being said. Looking at the specific attributes of an audience that's discussing a particular topic or expressing a particular emotion about a brand adds important context to what people are saying.

### SELF-DRIVING CARS

#### Older men are the most afraid

The main audience segment expressing fear over self-driving cars is men above the age of 35 with interests in science and technology, software development, Apple, finance, and world news. This is intriguing as this tech-savvy audience would be expected to be more accepting of and excited for new technology. For automakers and companies like Uber that look to incorporate self-driving technology, it's important to understand the fear and anger that this valuable audience segment is expressing, and to come up with a strategy to influence them. Luckily for companies investing in self-driving technology, younger audiences seem less fearful of the new technology and more accepting of it. Understanding the specific demographics and interests of a group expressing an emotion can help brands determine the best way to communicate with that particular audience segment.

### Self-Driving Cars Fear Emotion Age Breakdown



### Self-Driving Cars Fear Emotion Gender Breakdown



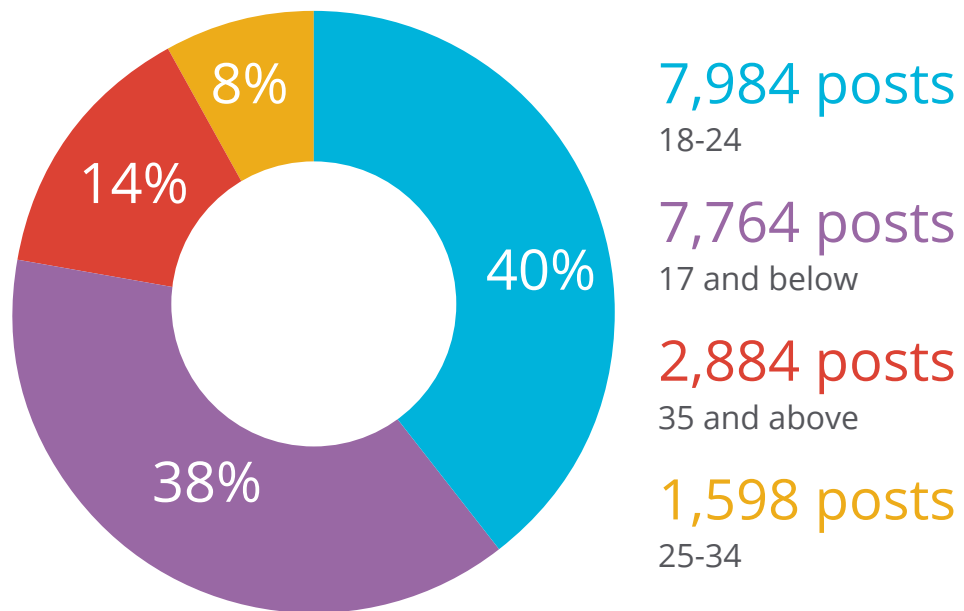
In terms of audience location, social media users in the District of Columbia hold a more positive disposition towards self-driving cars. The DC audience also expressed stronger intent to buy self-driving cars when they become available. Analyzing an audience by location allows companies like Tesla, Google, and other self-driving car manufacturers to make data-driven decisions about which markets to launch their product in and create content that is going to resonate with their target audiences.

## IPHONES

### A youthful boost in iPhone conversation around releases

The overall audience discussing iPhone releases since 2010 is mostly over 35 and 65% male. Yet when you look at the specific iPhone 7 release conversation from July 2016 through February 2017, the audience is much younger, with 41% of the audience under 17 and 61% female.

iPhone 7 Release Age Breakdown



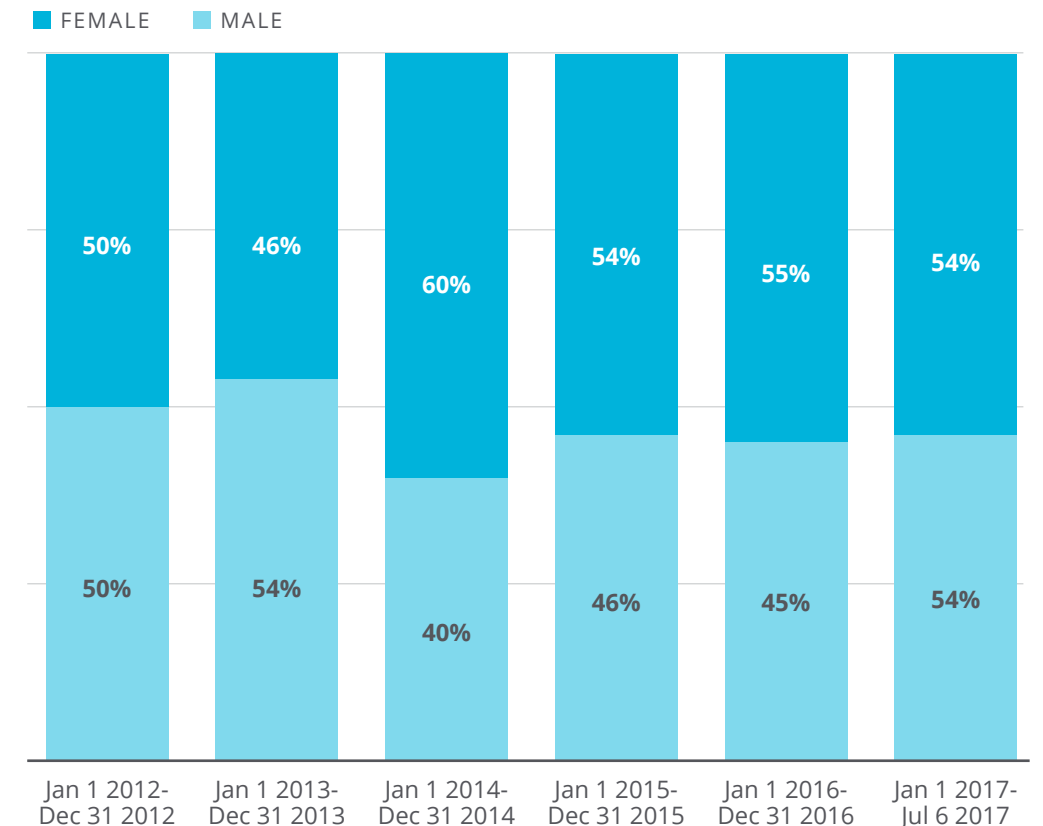
The top interests of those discussing the iPhone 7 release are Snapchat, high school, celebrity, and R&B. This seems to suggest that the younger demographic only talks about new iPhones around the release time and contributes substantially to the increase in conversation volume.

## RED MEAT

### Young women are driving the trend

The audience discussing red meat has stayed relatively constant since 2010, but starting in 2014, more women began to engage on the topic. Major influencers like Demi Lovato were able to connect to a young 17 and under audience by expressing her occasional red meat eating habits.

Red Meat Consumption Gender Breakdown



When we look at audience segmentation based on those who eat red meat vs. those who don't, there seems to be an even divide across shared psychographics based on age and gender. Based on 2012 data, both audiences shared common interests (astrology, basketball, ESPN, health, hip hop) but the pro red meat group is predominantly male aged 35 and above...and the anti red meat group is predominantly female aged 18-24 (college). The clear divide in demographics on the red meat discussion reinforces the finding that older men are more likely to continue eating red meat while younger women are more likely to avoid it.

# Why are they saying it?

The next step after understanding what's being said and who's saying it is understanding the "why" behind the conversation. Using custom analysis categories and machine learning, brands can pinpoint why certain issues are top of mind for the consumer. Ultimately, this may be the most important question for brands — not simply knowing what is being said and by whom, but getting at the actual motivations behind consumer opinions.

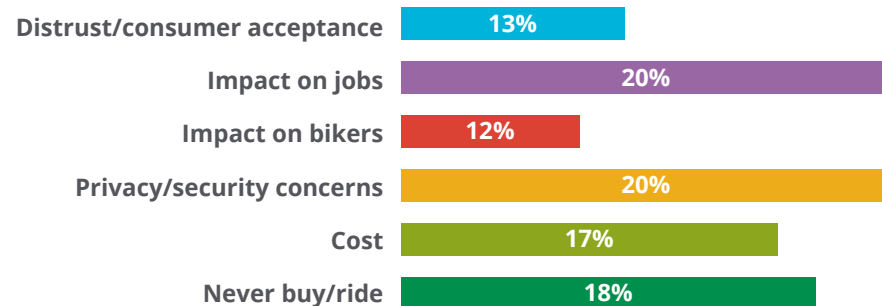
## SELF-DRIVING CARS

### Security concerns stoke fear

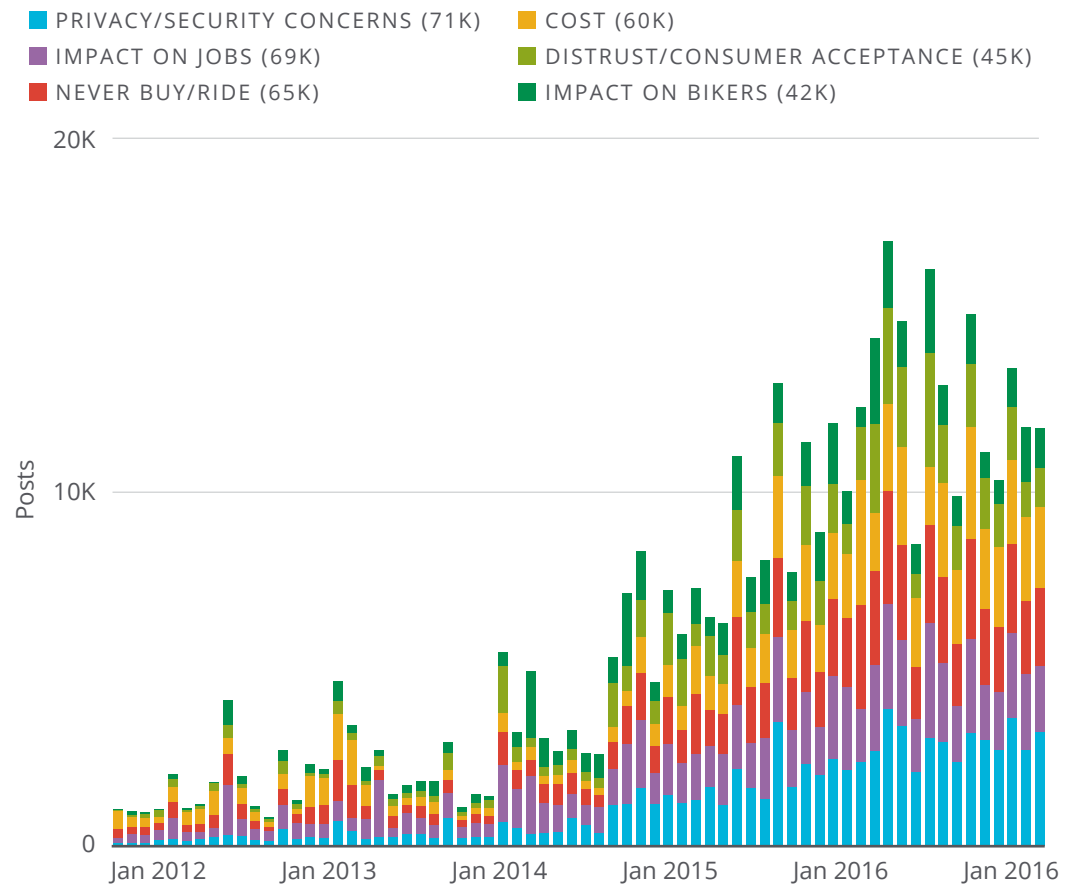
We know that fear and anger are dominating the self-driving car conversation, but why? This is where creating custom analysis categories around your specific question can be incredibly valuable.

Based on the custom analysis categories seen here, most individuals discussing the topic express fear for reasons ranging from the possibility for self-driving cars to be hacked to fear of job losses resulting from the new technology.

### Self-Driving Car Anger and Fear Emotion Breakdown



### Self-Driving Cars Negative Opinion Breakdown



**BeachTrader**  
@BeachTrader5

These hacking attacks show that self driving cars must be banned on public roads. They are a possible public health and security menace

27 Jun 2017

**Bryan Smart**  
@BryanSmart

Scary thought of the day: hacking self-driving cars to be remote control death machines. What defense can there be?

19 Jun 2017

## IPHONES

### "S" models get less hype

Why are people discussing iPhone releases at a lower volume than in the past? The conversation volume trend supports that the "S" models are discussed less than the iPhone 5, 6, and 7. It seems as though consumers often don't perceive them as being a "full update" as they have not ever included a major design change.

So why was the iPhone 7 conversation volume so much lower than the 6? The iPhone 7 kept mostly the same design as the 6 and 6s aside from unpopular removal of the physical home button and the headphone jack. Thus the only "new" design elements were viewed negatively by many consumers and were not visible at a quick glance. These factors likely contributed to the much lower intent to purchase in comparison with the iPhone 6.

#### Intent to Purchase iPhone 6, 6s, and 7

■ INTENT TO PURCHASE ■ UNDECIDED ■ WILL NOT PURCHASE



**onyinyayy**  
@onyinyayy

\*doesnt buy iPhone 7 because no headphone jack for aux cord"

7 Sep 2016

**CocoaPuff**  
@BigDaddyLondra

I do not want the iPhone 7. You can't even listen to music while charging ya phone.

3 Nov 2016

## RED MEAT

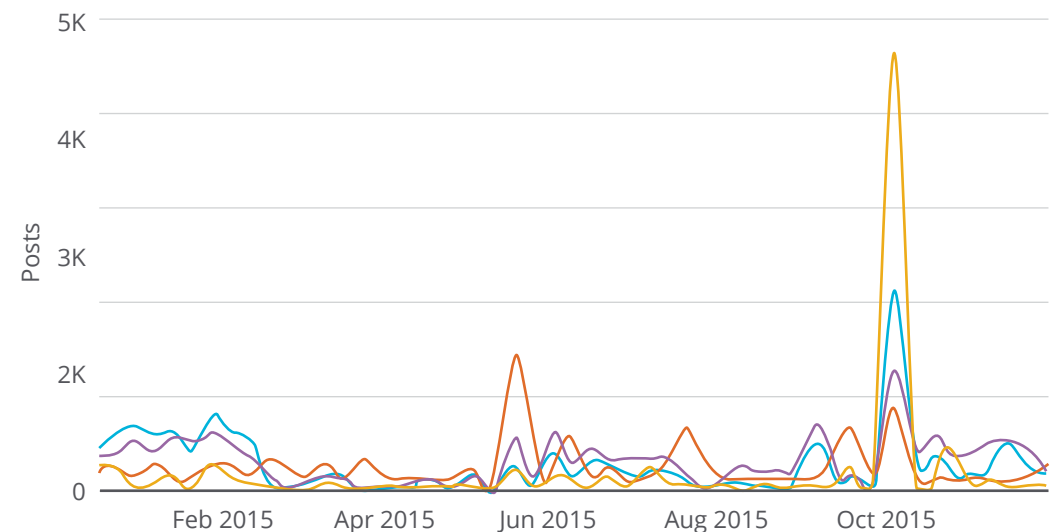
### Health studies validate diet choices

While social data indicates that eating red meat is still popular, there has been a shift towards reducing consumption with many individuals voicing their deliberate attempt to only eat red meat occasionally. This particular thread of conversation sees dramatic spikes in volume whenever a new study about the health risks associated with eating red meat gets released or meat gets recalled.

Much of the decline in red meat consumption seems to correlate with the release of health reports by authoritative organizations like WHO, CNN, and Harvard Studies. In 2015, the release of health reports about the risks associated with red meat sparked many conversations about reducing consumption.

#### Red Meat Consumption

■ EAT RED MEAT (13K) ■ SOMETIMES EAT RED MEAT (14K)  
■ AVOID/PLAN TO STOP (12K) ■ MENTIONS OF RECALL/STUDY (8K)



**Dr CJWalsh**  
@happyspud1

It's not just red meat: study links animal protein to higher risk of death; plant protein = lower mortality

17 Jul 2017

## How can you use the insights?

Throughout this guide, we've talked about several ways to uncover the consumer insights hidden in social media data, but we haven't addressed the most important question: How can brands actually leverage this information? Every consumer insight presents a wide variety of applications in anything from messaging to product design. While there are countless ways a brand might take action on a newly uncovered insight, we'll walk through a few examples of how brands could apply the findings on any of these topics and how any brand could use such insights in their own industry.

### SELF-DRIVING CARS

#### Addressing consumer concerns

Fear is a powerful emotion, and not one you want directed at your brand or products. Even for brands that aren't dealing with the potential life and death issues of robot cars, understanding consumer's feelings is extremely important. Consumer concerns about anything from a food ingredient to use of personal data become very important to understand when they are related to anything your business does.

It's clear that consumers are uneasy about self-driving cars. Automakers selling cars with any type of self-driving features need to focus on the safety of those vehicles in two important ways. First, that the self-driving features are safer than a human driver and second, that the technology powering the car is secure enough that it can't be hacked. For an automaker, a fear like hacking could directly impact how new connected cars are being designed and manufactured.

This example shows how consumer insights can have a direct impact on a brand's products and marketing. Understanding not only what people want, but the right way to approach their fears about a new technology can help a brand boost everything from their image to their sales. As privacy, security, and safety concerns continue to rise with new products and innovation, brands across industries need to understand consumer feelings in order to create engaging campaigns and successful products.

### IPHONES

#### Design driven by consumer insights

Consumer excitement about a new product can rise or fall very quickly. No matter what type of products your brand sells, it's important to keep track of the peaks and valleys of consumer enthusiasm and the reasons behind it. Hype over anything from a new pair of Nikes to kombucha tea will inevitably rise and fall, but by keeping a close eye on consumer conversation brands can be more prepared for what lies ahead.

In Apple's case, it's clear that the complete redesign and bigger screen that came with the iPhone 6 in 2014 led to a lot of excitement. Keeping the basic design of the iPhone unchanged for the three years following the launch of the iPhone 6 caused a drop in public excitement around iPhone releases. Apple appears to have recognized need for a brand new design with the iPhone X and the trend of less excitement over "s" releases with the iPhone 8 just one year after the iPhone 7, forgoing the usual "s" branding on the 2017 model.



For other types of brands, consumer insights can provide an excellent way to understand when products begin to stagnate and need a design update. Analyzing consumer conversation about your products can help brands understand when consumers want change as well as when it's okay to keep things unchanged.

#### RED MEAT

### Incorporate health trends and use influencers

Consumer habits are constantly changing. Whether your product is a food, technology, or a CPG staple, the way that consumers live their lives directly impacts how they approach your product. Understanding the underlying cause of a change in consumer habits is important for any brand. What fitness trends are on the rise? How are consumers watching TV? Where do consumers prefer to shop? All of these questions could be answered with consumer insights from social media.

In terms of red meat, the consumers' shift toward being more health-conscious has directly impacted how much red meat they eat. Understanding the reasons for a decline in red meat consumption can help brands create marketing campaigns that promote the health benefits of a protein-heavy diet as well as grass-fed and organic meat. There is also an opportunity to leverage influencers to promote red meat to specific audience segments.

These same insights can apply to any brand. Understand what's causing people to change their behavior and harness that in your strategy for messaging, influencers, and advertising. Social media analytics provides one of the best way for brands to learn why consumers make the choices they make. These insights have the power to help any brand hit the right notes with marketing and advertising.

## Conclusion

Consumer insights help brands increase the effectiveness of their products, marketing, advertising, and more. To stay competitive, any business needs to understand their target audience's preferences and behavior. Social media provides the perfect data source for uncovering consumer insights, as it constantly reflects consumer opinion in real time. Analyzing social media data allows brands to pinpoint specific consumer trends and dive deep into the evolution of consumer trends over time.

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To learn more about how social media analytics can help you better understand evolving consumer trends across the globe, schedule a customized demo today.

[Request a Demo](#)



Crimson Hexagon