IN A WORLD FILLED WITH NOISE, HOW WILL YOU LISTEN?

Abstract

Gone are the days when 'customer service' was confined to telephone calls and angry letters. With the proliferation of social media channels, customer service has grown exponentially, which has allowed organisations to connect directly with the customers and provide them with an outlet to address their grievances. However, it's a double-edged sword as organisations struggle to handle mountains of customer conversations emanating from a diverse set of social media tools. This case study discusses how an IBPM team successfully handled social media listening and sentiment analysis for a US-based consumer electronics giant by listening to 500,000+ social conversations!

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The background: Speaking in the shadows

The popular children's game, Chinese whispers, is an excellent example of how a piece of information ends up as garbled material when it reaches the final player. The original message may have been harmless, but when it passes through each listener — who then adds his/her version — the end message often transforms into salacious rumours and pointless gossip. In the business world, however, organisations cannot afford to be lax on the kind of messaging or feedback they receive from the customers, especially in the consumer electronics and lifestyle applications space. In an interconnected world where information, or rather misinformation, is readily available at the click of a button, the consequences of ignoring customer voices can be disastrous for the brands.

Often perceived as an 'aspirational brand' and the one that commands fierce 'brand loyalty', our client is a leading innovator of consumer technology, which has successfully transformed the world of consumer electronics. The client was concerned about identifying the top issues reported by customers related to its fast-selling products, such as music players, smartphones, laptops, wearables, and desktops, to name a few. Further, the client sought to analyse customer sentiment and their engagement levels during marketing campaigns around existing and newly launched product lines. As such, the client was on the lookout for a vendor that could deliver weekly social media listening reports — including ad hoc requests — one in English and one in Mandarin, specific to the Chinese market. With these reports, the client wanted to derive actionable insights for better business and marketing decisions.

The challenges: Connecting the dots

To analyse customer sentiment, the client used a social listening platform called Tracx (now renamed as Talkwalker). However, its product development team lacked necessary social media listening expertise and was seeking a quick setup and configuration of the social listening platform. To overcome these challenges, we set up a team of social listening analysts to cover more than 20 million social conversations across digital communities and social media channels in English and Mandarin languages. It was imperative for us to define and structure a streamlined process to capture social media chatter across 15 distinct product lines and cluster them based on context and sentiments, followed by a detailed analysis of actionable insights customised for different client personas.

The approach: Combining listening and monitoring

To streamline the entire process, we set up a team of analysts based out of Bangalore in a 24 x 5 delivery model to support the English language process, while a separate team supported requirements in Mandarin language out of our Shanghai office in an 8 x 5 delivery model. Together, the analysts delivered over 20,000+ hours of support annually. Additionally, the team focused on other approaches, such as:

- Implemented and leveraged a unified Social Media Monitoring and Social Analytics platform to listen and assess customer sentiment.

- Collected reliable and relevant data from over 250 million blogs, social networking sites, forums, and others channels for customer complaints and grievances.

- Tracked real-time results with drill-down capabilities customised to each client persona for more details and to view individual posts.

- Initiated an on-demand comparison and analysis of multiple saved searches — a 360-degree view of social data.

- Built automated sampling methodology through Excel macro and used an

R platform for faster and effective sampling data to ensure global scalability and high-class social media consulting and insight-generation services.

- Increased sample size and removed non-social data for more focused and deeper analysis.

- Implemented text analytics for automated data tagging.

- Assigned a primary/secondary analyst per product area in both languages.

Social media data aggregator platforms setup and configured for use

Defined topic	Defined topic	Defined topic	Defined topic

Capture social media posts and conversations

Cluster and refine as per context & sentiment

Analysis of data

Consolidate, sorted, and prioritised into insights as per audience
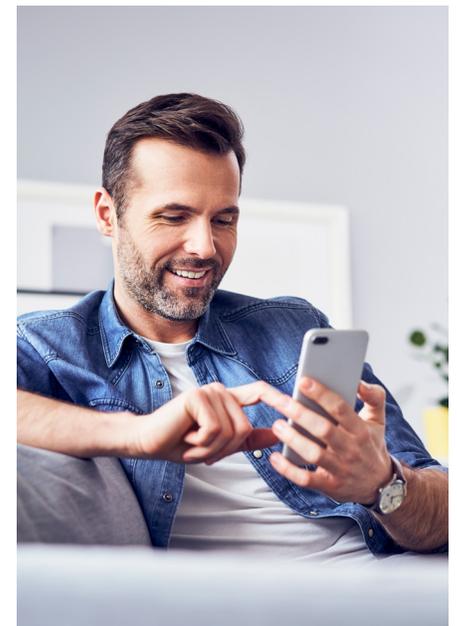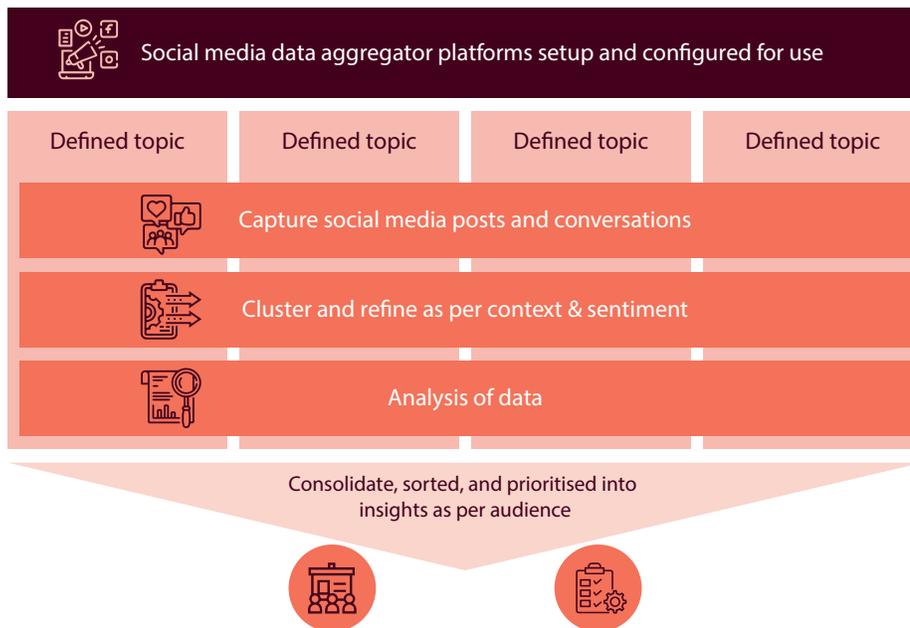
The results: Analysing the buzz

Our experience in sifting through relevant customer sentiments, social media consulting, insight generation, and global scalability helped deliver valuable insights to the client. With our social media listening tools, we 'heard' the client's customers and their pain points regarding the products and services. Using our data and insights, the client's customer service team was able to identify and resolve major customer complaints as

well as thwart potential adverse feedback from the customers. We helped save the client 20,000 analyst hours of customer 'listening' in a year! As a comparison, we analysed 500,000+ customer conversations and mined them for valuable insights for the client. We also delivered customised reports for the client and their stakeholders, which provided a macro and micro view of the prevalent customer trends in the market. In addition, we also:

- Increased sample size by 4x through automation to analyse larger data sets.

- Improved data tagging accuracy by ~30%.

- Increased conversation 'reading rate' by 95% in 2.5 years, leading to reduced TAT.

Conclusion

History books are replete with example of kings and emperors who behaved unreasonably and the subjects had to bear the brunt of their idiosyncrasies. Come 20th century, the business world has discovered a new 'king': the customer. However, unlike the kings of the yore, this new 'king' isn't prone to eccentricity. Rather, he has a simple demand: listen to me! The proliferation of smartphones and inexpensive mobile data allows the customer to vent his fury on a brand at a place of his choosing. That's when customer sentiment analysis and social media listening becomes important for the brand. It helps in understanding what the customers feel towards your brand and its positioning in the market. And, no organisation, irrespective of the size of its operations, can choose to ignore it.

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