

MARKETING

Brand perception: What it is, why it matters, and how to measure it

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When was the last time you really thought about your perception of a product brand or service? Sure, we might use online brands every day in our work or at play, but do you think about how you perceive a brand? You should.

Brand perception is important. It is the sum of our feelings, attitudes and experiences with a product or service.

Brand perception is what moves the needle for companies, taking a common product and giving it elements that evoke emotional feelings.

Every car ad during football season is appealing to a viewer's emotions about the brand.

Every skincare ad seeks to sway a consumer's emotions into creating a favorable brand perception.

Ultimately, the customer is the one who decides her perception of your brand. Whether you are marketing a consumer commodity such as clothing, or a high-level business-to-business Web application, how consumers view the brand can make or break a product.

Let us break down exactly what brand perception is, why it matters, and how you can measure its impact in your daily work.

What is brand perception?

Put simply, brand perception is the sum of feelings that a consumer has about a brand. These thoughts and feelings happen when a consumer is aware of the brand, and what follows when that consumer hears, sees or interacts with the brand and its product.

Brand perception incorporates a multitude of areas that touch upon the brand's customer interactions.

From product development and packaging to public relations and social engagement, brand perception is a top-level measuring stick of a product's visual presence, goodwill and emotional character. All of these can play into the product's success.

Think about Facebook, for example.

Last year Facebook's brand perception fell out of favor with many because of privacy issues and the platform being found to be the conduit of false or misleading news stories.

Brand perceptions of Facebook were significantly changed in 2018, which is why the company **is now making moves** to make public opinion of its brand more positive.

Even for small companies, brand perception is one part of a larger marketing equation. How does your product or service resonate with its target audience, why does it matter, how do consumers feel about your brand, and how can you measure this?

Why it matters

Brand perception is important because it reflects what consumers think about a company's culture. We have mentioned Facebook, but this affects even emerging online brands such as **Fashion Nova** and **Everlane**.

You might see a branded television spot, read a review or catch a pre-roll YouTube ad. These brief interactions can quickly change a consumer's perception of a company from negative to neutral, or from neutral to positive. That is the power of brand perception, and that is why it matters.

Once consumers formulate a perception in their minds, whether positive, negative or neutral, it is hard to change their beliefs. That is why companies are trying hard to measure brand perception on their own.

Marketing brand perception

How can companies measure brand perception? There are agencies that would be glad to charge \$5,000 to \$25,000 a month for the privilege, but your own team can scout the Web to get a fairly reliable reflection of consumers' perceptions of your brand.

Some ways that your research and marketing teams can do this might include:

- Setting up Google alerts to track online mentions
- Reading online reviews. This is critical for all brands. Efficient customer response can also help with brand reception
- Social listening, which means monitoring **social media comments**, hashtags and other mentions
- Measuring metrics for pay-per-click brand search and dwell time

Overall, companies need to work hard to measure brand perception.

A brand owner must measure the brand from the outside to truly understand how people view it. To do so, companies can try a variety of methods to gauge brand perception:

- Track metrics in your target audience around your brand
- Use custom research among primary and secondary target audiences
- Conduct a **brand audit** on your company's brand perception against that of your leading competitors'
- Track customer sentiment through each stage of the purchase cycle, including information search, product evaluation, comparison research, buying decision and post-buying feelings

BRAND PERCEPTION is a critical part of your company's marketing effectiveness.

Getting a handle on it and putting your resources into knowing how to use it will help your company better plan its marketing campaigns.

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