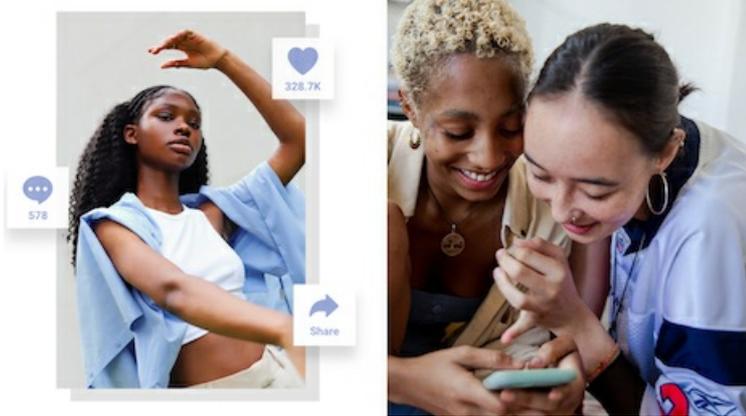RESEARCH

Retailers pushing positive consumer sentiments on social platforms most readily: Brandwatch

January 3, 2024

Consumers are largely the ones steering the discussions online, leaving companies to sit back and listen. Image credit: Brandwatch

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Social listening analytics platform Brandwatch is sharing recommendations for how brands can navigate an increasingly crowded peer-to-peer media landscape.

Marketers will have to continue adapting to evolving features and algorithmic updates in 2024. New data from the firm reveals that when it comes to navigating these challenges, certain sectors are faring better than others; in a study of feedback shared online across social networking hubs, blogs, forums and review sites, Brandwatch's State of Social report found that of eight different industries, consumers are most readily sharing positive comments about brands in the entertainment and retail industries.

For the report, Brandwatch analyzed hundreds of millions of data points across the automotive, consumer packaged goods (CPG), consumer tech, energy, entertainment, retail, food and financial services industries from Jan. 1, 2023, to June 30, 2023. Across the eight sectors, 347 brands were studied using in-house consumer research and Brandwatch's AI assistant, Iris.

Social situation

According to the report, brands only initiate 1.51 percent of all conversations related to themselves on social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and X, formerly known as Twitter.

Consumers are largely the ones steering the discussions, driving brand mentions in a shifting digital environment. Experts at Brandwatch believe that there is "untapped potential" for organizations to be able to control their narrative" in these spaces.

That said, certain trends are currently dominating social media discourse.

Generational breakdown of audiences on X (Twitter), by industry

Source: Brandwatch Consumer Research

Table shows the breakdown of audiences across the eight studied industries by generation.
Data gathered from public posts on X (Twitter) between Jan 1 - Jun 30 2023.

	Industry	Baby boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
1	Auto	18.1%	23.9%	36.2%	21.8%
2	Consumer tech	6.5%	15.6%	44.6%	33.3%
3	CPG	18.6%	21.4%	36.3%	23.7%
4	Energy	39%	24.6%	25.5%	10.9%
5	Entertainment	8.2%	13.7%	37.1%	41%
6	Financial services	22.2%	22.4%	33.9%	21.6%
7	Food services	9.6%	17%	42.4%	31%
8	Retail	23.1%	26.8%	32.3%	17.9%

● Powered by Brandwatch

The report breaks down which generations make up the majority of every industry. Image credit: Brandwatch

Artificial intelligence is continuing to gain ground. Generative tools related to writing, imagery and chatbots are growing to be more and more endorsed by marketers and others outside of the tech field, reshaping how businesses operate, create content and communicate with their customers.

ChatGPT is also highlighted, the report calling it "a social marketer's secret sauce."

The capability allows for the streamlining of everyday tasks on the part of professionals, but also complements the creative process and amplifies output for brands.
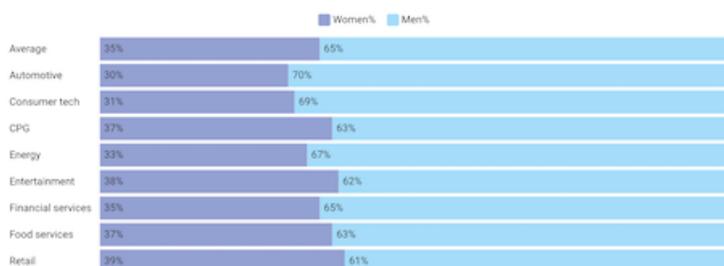
Larger marketing platforms are working to form their own proprietary AI tools, a trend that is likewise called out in the findings. The developments are said to save time for users, improve research, increase productivity and optimize social strategies.

As social media grows, platforms are also getting enhanced.

Gender breakdown of consumers on X, formerly Twitter, by industry

Source: Brandwatch Consumer Research

This chart is displaying the gender split of the authors discussing over 347 household brand names across eight different industries.
Data gathered from public posts on X, formerly Twitter, between Jan 1 - Jun 30 2023.

■ Women% ■ Men%

Industry	Women%	Men%
Average	35%	65%
Automotive	30%	70%
Consumer tech	31%	69%
CPG	37%	63%
Energy	33%	67%
Entertainment	38%	62%
Financial services	35%	65%
Food services	37%	63%
Retail	39%	61%

● Powered by Brandwatch

Based on the analysis, men make up the majority of audiences on X, formerly known as Twitter. Image credit: Brandwatch

This movement is pushing networks to focus on the audience experience and update accordingly. The new offerings of TikTok and YouTube are specifically mentioned by Brandwatch, as the interactive and live features are framed as positive advancements for creators.

Social media fragmentation is another element set to shape the landscape of social media in 2024, with platforms forming sister spaces such as Meta's reveal of Threads, which also serves as a direct competitor to X.
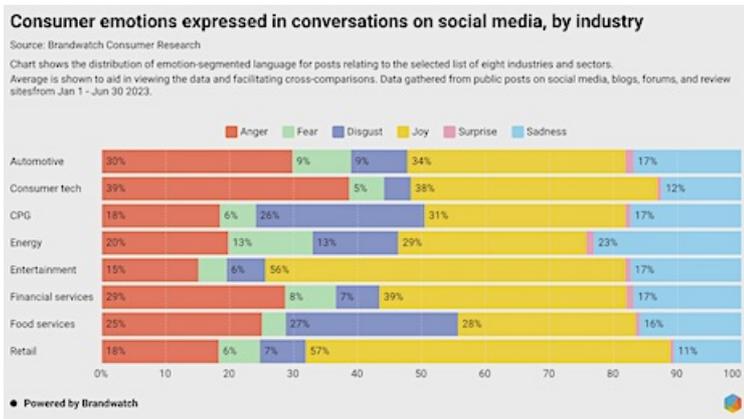
Finally, the importance of online reviews is emphasized, as customers are turning to peer-written comments about products more and more before they buy. In this new age of sharing digitally, what consumers are saying about their purchases will "wield considerable influence" and "must be a focal point of any modern marketing strategy," per the findings.

As brands find their footing in the new year, social media marketers will need to navigate various complexities while connecting with audiences in a way that boosts engagement online.

This time with feeling

The analysis broke down social mentions by feelings, categorizing social mentions as expressing anger, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise or joy.

Consumer tech, automotive and financial services make up the highest amount of angry mentions. Respectively, 39 percent, 30 percent and 29 percent of conversations about brands in the categories are fueled by the negative emotion.

Consumer emotions expressed in conversations on social media, by industry

Source: Brandwatch Consumer Research

Chart shows the distribution of emotion-segmented language for posts relating to the selected list of eight industries and sectors.
Average is shown to aid in viewing the data and facilitating cross-comparisons. Data gathered from public posts on social media, blogs, forums, and review sites from Jan 1 - Jun 30 2023.

Legend: Anger | Fear | Disgust | Joy | Surprise | Sadness

Industry	Anger	Fear	Disgust	Joy	Surprise	Sadness
Automotive	30%	9%	9%	34%		17%
Consumer tech	39%		5%	38%		12%
CPG	18%	6%	26%	31%		17%
Energy	20%	13%	13%	29%		23%
Entertainment	15%	6%		56%		17%
Financial services	29%	8%	7%	39%		17%
Food services	25%		27%	28%		16%
Retail	18%	6%	7%	57%		11%

● Powered by Brandwatch

Only two industries are seeing the majority of conversations about their brands be driven by positive emotions. Image credit: Brandwatch

The energy sector accounted for the highest portion of sad mentions, the sentiment making up 23 percent of all industry-related conversations. Food and CPG saw the biggest number driven by disgust, which centered 27 percent and 26 percent of respective discussions.

Meanwhile, joy accounted for 56 percent and 57 percent of all label-related conversations for entertainment and retail brands, respectively.

These are the only two sectors that saw positivity drive the majority of social media discussions.

The conclusion falls in line with trends identified in the past (see story), as 2020 ushered in a renewed appreciation for all things experiential. Since the COVID-19-related lockdowns, consumers have been showing a preference for purchases that provide meaning or memories (see story).

As a result, companies outside of hospitality have been infusing their physical spaces with hosting elements and engaging with customers via immersive events (see story).

Those already within the experiential industries have been doubling down on their value, upping the sensory characteristics of their storefronts, products and interactions with consumers. Whether by focusing on building a sense of place (see story), complementing standing programs with taste (see story), among other sensations, or bolstering entertainment options (see story), labels across the board are pouring resources into keeping their customers engaged in real life as well as online.