

CISION®

MEASURING BRAND SENTIMENT



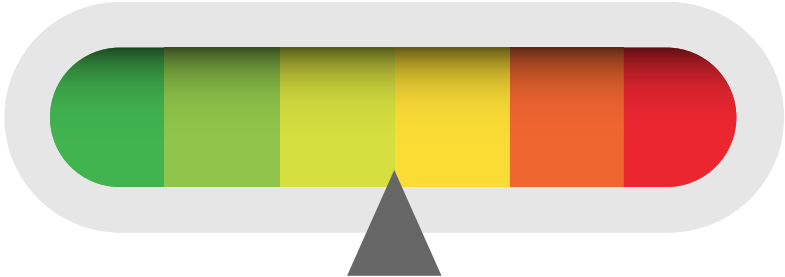
INTRODUCTION

It's a puzzle that communications professionals all over the world have always worked to solve: How do people feel about your brand? Knowing the answer to this question does a very important thing—it gives you context. Context for your campaigns, your messaging, your overall strategy.

Now in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding and measuring brand sentiment is more important than ever. How does the public perceive your brand during this time? Have your communication efforts been well-received, or have they fallen flat? Have your competitors out-communicated and out-competed you—or have they made a misstep that resulted in backlash the rest of your industry could stand to learn from?

Technology has improved to the point that knowing the sentiment around your brand is no longer something you have to extrapolate from a small sample size in a focus group or a survey. It's now possible to measure sentiment through many different channels and build a bigger picture of the feelings toward your brand or any brand you're working with.

We'll break all of this down, starting with why measuring brand sentiment is so important. (You downloaded this paper, so chances are you know it's valuable especially given the current climate, but maybe there are some decision-makers you still need to convince.)



Why measuring brand sentiment is so important

We've already mentioned that measuring brand sentiment gives you context, but context for what, exactly? For your brand's place in the industry in the eyes of consumers and your target audience, for starters. Add a pandemic on top of that and monitoring and measurement of the sentiment around a brand has never been more important than it is now.

Brand sentiment is an important part of brand reputation. If you've got a great brand reputation, it's easier to weather any kind of storm or crisis that comes your way (including the current environment that is out of anyone's hands). If you've got a bad reputation, you better have a good crisis plan in place and be ready to put in the work.

But what if your reputation is . . . non-existent? Brand sentiment is also a bellwether for brand awareness. Is anyone even thinking about your brand *at all*?

Knowing where you stand lets you plan your strategy going forward: Where you should invest more of your resources and which metrics you should be concentrating on. It can also help you refine what you're already measuring and combine insights to get a more in-depth look at the sentiment around your brand.

For example, are you measuring earned media? Just tracking the number of times your brand is mentioned in external articles is a start, but it's more meaningful to know if your brand is the subject of a piece, or if it is just mentioned. Most importantly in either case, what is the sentiment around the mention?

Combining that with insights from other sources- which we'll discuss in the next section- will give you a more robust view of the sentiment around your brand than just relying on one source.



How measuring brand sentiment works

As we briefly touched on in the previous section, the best way to approach brand sentiment is to identify every potential source of sentiment around your brand, gather as much data as possible (this will depend on the resources available to you and your team) from those sources, then combine them to form a fuller picture of how exactly the public feels about your brand.

Some sources to get you started:

- Social media
- Customer NPS scores
- Customer/target audience surveys
- Other customer data and product usage
- Review sites
- Earned media
- Anecdotal feedback from customer-facing teams

Start with what sentiment data you're able to get from the tools you're already using; some social media tools have sentiment analysis that you can draw from, for example, or you can pull a random sample of Twitter mentions- using your handle or just mentioning your brand name- from whatever you use for social monitoring and analyze them manually for sentiment.

Even if a tool you're using provides some sentiment analysis you'll still need to review it with human eyes to ensure it matches what the tool has classified it as. (Robots are still very bad at the many nuances of human language.)

Once you've gathered this data, how do you analyze it?

How analyzing brand sentiment works

You want to start by looking for deltas—changes—in your data. Has sentiment moved from neutral to positive or negative over time? Did it change significantly in a short amount of time, either positively or negatively, then return to more of a baseline? Note if this occurred around any event, and whether that event was something your brand did or something that happened to your brand (or a compound issue involving both, like a brand crisis during a global pandemic).

You also want to see what your sentiment is compared to the sentiment around your industry in general. Be sure you have realistic expectations for this; if you're an airline or a cable company, don't expect a high positive sentiment. But don't just outright dismiss what this sentiment tells you either; you can dig deeper into it to uncover key themes around consistent consumer complaints to create an actionable list of next steps for your brand to improve on. Note that if sentiment around your brand is more positive than around your industry in general, you're already doing something with your overall strategy that's working.

Be sure to see how specifically you compare to your competitors as well— is your overall sentiment more positive than theirs? If theirs is more positive, what can you learn about their approach? Do they nurture their earned media strategy more than you do currently? Do they have a different approach on social? Do they incentivize their customers to leave reviews on certain review sites?

Consider also how sentiment relates to your share of voice in your industry. If you have the largest share of voice compared to your competitors- but it's mostly negative in sentiment- then you know that's not the success it might seem to be on the surface and you need to take a hard look at your current strategy.

How to set up sentiment analysis

How you set up sentiment analysis for your brand will depend largely on the resources at your disposal. Smaller companies will likely have to manually combine insights from several tools to put together a more comprehensive picture of what sentiment around their brand looks like. Brands with more resources can invest in a tool that takes a more comprehensive look at sentiment around their brand or can be customized to do so.

No matter what technology you can tap for the job, it won't be as good as humans are at understanding nuance in language, and things like sarcasm or jokes. (We'll discuss this more in-depth in the shortcomings section.) Have realistic expectations for that and be ready to set aside some time for human review and confirmation of any data you gather.

If you don't know where to start at all, consider a random sample of some social media posts about your brand (tagged and

untagged), some earned media placements, and some reviews. What is the sentiment of each of these generally like? You might find that on social, sentiment toward your brand is more neutral, while earned media placements have been generally positive and reviews more negative. Even this small amount of brand sentiment data can help you craft your communication strategy going forward: You know it would be a good idea to incentivize more reviews being written, especially if you know a customer had a positive experience (bring your account managers or other customer-facing teams into the process for this). Your earned media strategy is obviously doing well, so consider how you can continue to improve it.

A neutral sentiment on social isn't a bad thing either: You can work to build a more engaged community that should over time become more positive, but at least you don't have to work from rebuilding a negative brand sentiment into a positive one.



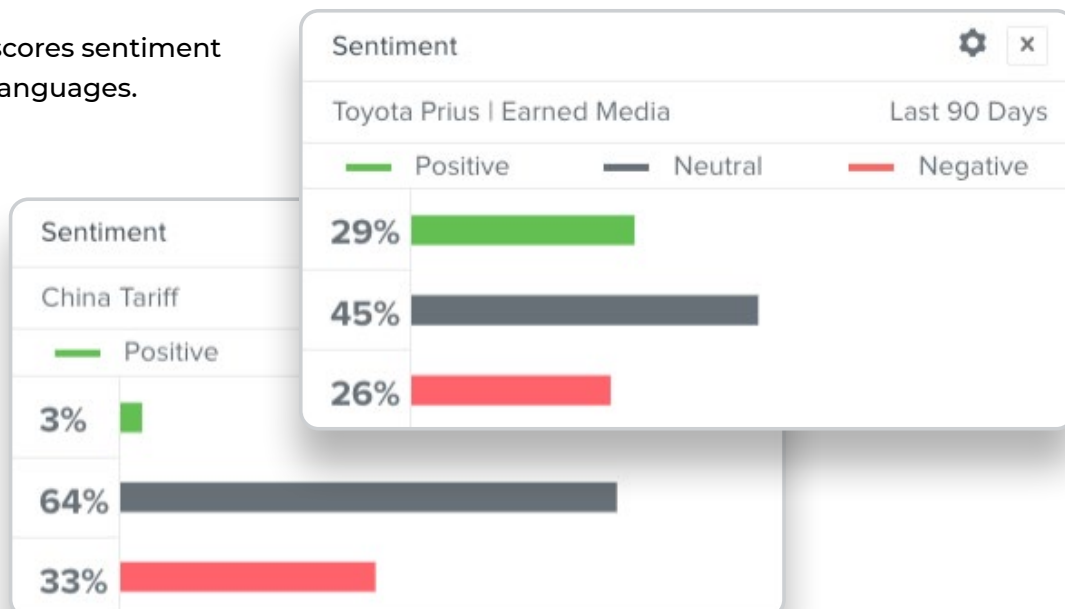
How Cision does sentiment analysis

The first step to measuring brand sentiment is having comprehensive monitoring in place, so you're able to draw data from as many of the sources we've discussed as possible. Not having to compile everything manually is a huge time-saver; this way you only have to dedicate some time to final manual review and preparing to present reports to the rest of your team, bosses or stakeholders.

At Cision, we use NLP (natural language processing) technology that identifies key entities in articles—like brands, people, places, etc.—and assigns sentiment on a 5 point scale:

1. Very positive
2. Positive
3. Neutral
4. Negative
5. Very Negative

The system scores sentiment in 22 native languages.



If you'd like to see how Cision can tap this technology in your brand's program, request a demo or reach out to your Account Manager.

Shortcomings of sentiment analysis

Remember that a human review is always good to catch nuanced language, but NLP technology today has come a long way in the past few years.

People *plus* technology is where the best success lies.

CONCLUSION

Sentiment analysis should be one piece of your larger overall strategy; if sentiment is positive toward your brand on social media, but neutral in earned media for example, what work can you do to change that?

Working with PR to refine and spread your messaging would be a good first step that hopefully earns returns in the feedback you get in measuring sentiment.



**KEEP
CALM
AND
MEASURE
SENTIMENT**

ABOUT CISION

Cision is a leading global provider of earned media software and services to public relations and marketing communications professionals. Cision's software allows users to identify key influencers, craft and distribute strategic content, and measure meaningful impact. Cision has over 4,800 employees with offices in 24 countries throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC. For more information about Cision's award-winning products and services, including the Cision Communications Cloud®, visit www.cision.ca and follow Cision on Twitter [@CisionCA](https://twitter.com/CisionCA). To support PR and communications professionals during this difficult time, Cision has compiled these [free Resources for COVID-19 Communications](#).



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