

Find the right social data

Coding conversations by emotion has always been a challenge but now tools such as Social Emotion Score can more accurately reflect the impact of social conversations on sales

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Talk of Big Data is everywhere. And with what seems like a new social platform launching every day, the concept hits home as analysts wade through piles of data. The first response to Big Data seems to be using every bit of data to make communications more useful, but /find that the key is actually simplicity. Or Red Data: the concept of finding the right, most powerful data. While the individual data elements are really useful, it's the string tying them together that is often times most powerful. The challenge of finding a story in that much data is a dream for a digital analyst. And more times than not, the output is a new metric that is a composite of a few others.

Take social media for example. When brands first engaged in social media, there were no metrics, so ROI was never a question. Over time, Facebook and Twitter launched analytics platforms, and social monitoring platforms kept improving. As a result, clients are asking which metrics matter and what the value of a like or share is. What they should be asking is: What is the return on my social campaigns? Take that one step further, what if they asked how social word of mouth impacts their business.

Recently **AdAge** published an article stating 'Buzzkill: Coca-Cola Finds No Sales Lift from Online Chatter.' First reaction: horrified.



For a person that has spent the past few years solving this problem, the idea seemed foreign.

In actuality, I guess the idea that there is no direct link between raw organic social conversation and sales makes a lot of sense. Social listening tools are great at providing direction, but they've got a way to go in terms of accuracy. Most of these tools pull in a lot of data, and they analyse sentiment like a machine - literally.

For example, take the post: 'Man! Those AT&T spots with the kids kill me. Keep 'em coming.' Any social tool would rate this tweet as a negative mention because it contains the word 'killing'. But, because humans are awesome, we know that this is most definitely a positive tweet. Most tools also don't understand the different variations of sentiment, leaving things like 'a little frustrating' and 'they are awful' to be coded as equally negative.

It's these challenges that led us to find a custom solution, the red data. After using every available metric, and even some calculated ones, we investigated options for custom sentiment coding and found a partner in Decooda. Decooda codes every conversation by its emotion, teasing out the nuances between happiness and awe or anger and disappointment. It's these kind of conversation cues that help brands react to people in retail environments, so replicating them online made a lot of sense.

The insight from understanding emotions is good, great even, but for a large brand that might have 15 million mentions in a year, it's not a super efficient approach.

Using the emotion coding, BBDO created an index that we can use as a single metric for evaluating conversation: Social Emotion Score, or SES for short.

Now the scary part: seeing if it actually matters. Can we in fact measure the impact of social conversation? Social Emotion Score has shown a correlation of 40-60% with sales, across a variety of industries. Huge sigh of relief, you would think. Not really, just the first filter, now the metric had to work in a model to confirm that there was actually causation, not just correlation. Again it worked. Maybe, at least breathing now. Last step, have an expert, okay two, validate it. This means handing over the data and letting them 'torture the metric', validating coding manually and experimenting with

other factors. Also asking them to build a model and see if they get similar results. And check, this test was passed too.

As a researcher, this quest has been for insights as much as it's been about measurement. Creating a tool, that basically boils the proverbial ocean to find the pieces of data that matter. Now the fun part: actually using the metric.

• *Understand what topics drive business*

Think about it, how often has one customer complaint or negative mention sent a handful of employees running to calm the storm. With a metric that is correlated to sales, we can determine which mentions should, in fact, send the team running and which should have them continuing a normal productive day. This works very well for a highly sensitive industry, such as military or government, where once something catches, it's hard to stop.

• *Determine which messages matter*

Social monitoring has had agencies and brands using volume to determine what consumers care about. A lot of mentions indicates higher interest right? Makes sense, but a lot of people talking does not mean that a lot of people will purchase. It's the tenor of that conversation that indicates who will purchase. This helps focus messaging on the things that truly matter in the decision-making process. For one client, looking at every piece of data would have told us to create a story about apps for them. By using Social Emotion Score instead, we determined that a pricing story was more effective.

• *Measure RoI on a campaign*

This is a huge one. Brands have been building social experiences for years. And success has been tracked by those sales that are directly trackable. It's a good start, but in the real world people don't immediately leave what they are doing to make a purchase. In fact, sometimes they may even wait days or weeks. Using Social Emotion Score in a marketing mix model lets us understand what kind of halo engaging in that experience had. With one client, we saw that measuring that halo increased the sales volume nearly four times greater than what was directly attributable. That's a happy RoI story.

• *Understanding how conversation fits in the mix*

Mix models historically had no way to account for social conversation. Not for the conversation that occurs about a brand, but also not about the conversation that is generated by paid advertising efforts. By putting the score into the model, both can be answered. That means we can actually measure the assignment 'making it go viral'. For another of our clients, we have seen this number reach 20%. Think about that. All of the data in a model and yet, typically, at least half of sales are unmeasurable. Finding this piece of red data made it possible to take away another chunk of what was previously unexplainable. Making it possible for a client to recreate success.

• *Creating an indicator*

Through modelling we can understand what impact conversation has on business metrics and what the lag time is. With that information we can monitor Social Emotion Score to predict fluctuations in metrics before they occur. That allows for optimisations that can keep clients on track to meet business goals. Think about how that can help, finding a piece of data that will tell you in advance that you are not going to meet your goals. Allowing you to shift spend across messages or channels to make sure that that doesn't happen. That is truly the definition of a KPI.

This is what people need to understand about Big Data. It truly isn't about using all of the data, it is finding the pieces of data that truly matter, for us that was Social Emotion Score, but for another client it may be something totally different.

Creating a way to value people talking seemed a bit crazy at the start of this project, especially given the race to find a solution. It's been an adventurous road, but definitely not one that will end any time soon. This is just the first pass, with social media moving as rapidly as it is and with more data becoming available, this metric will evolve over time. Likely, it'll just be one in a set of social RoI metrics. One thing is clear though: you can measure the impact of social conversation.

