Talkwalker

The Future of Consumer Intelligence

July 2023

4.8 Billion people now using the internet

87% of consumers prefer to research products online before making a purchase

2 h and 24 min. social media user now spends roughly per day using social channels
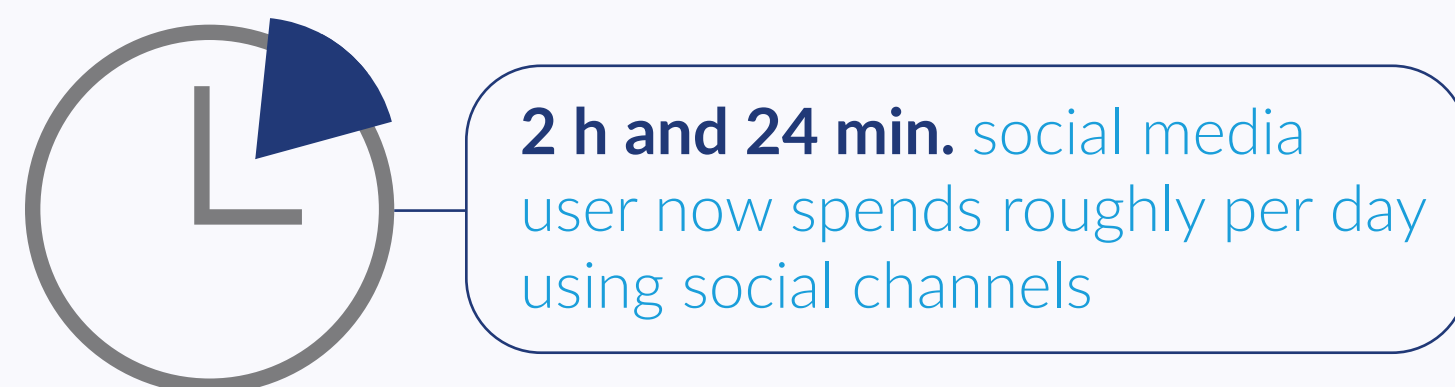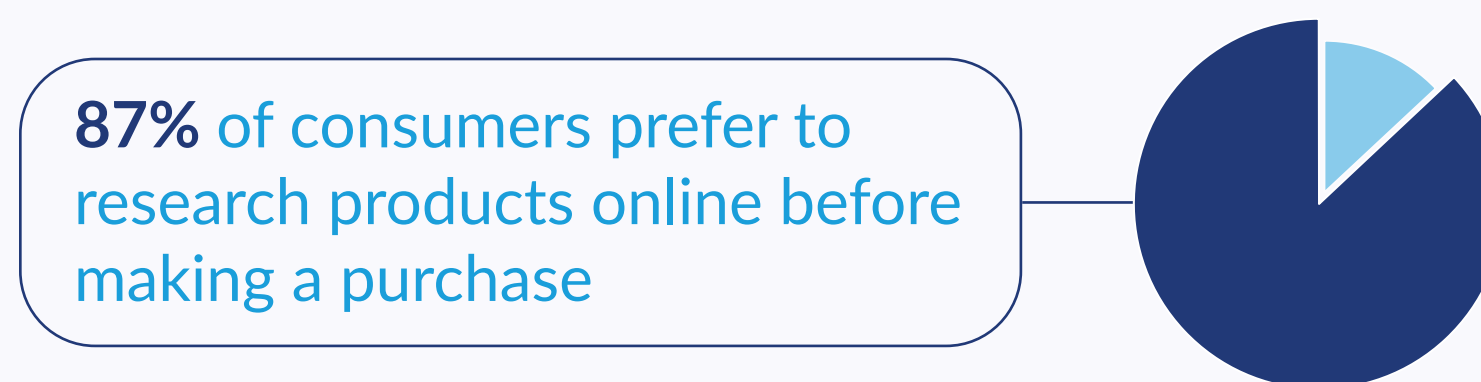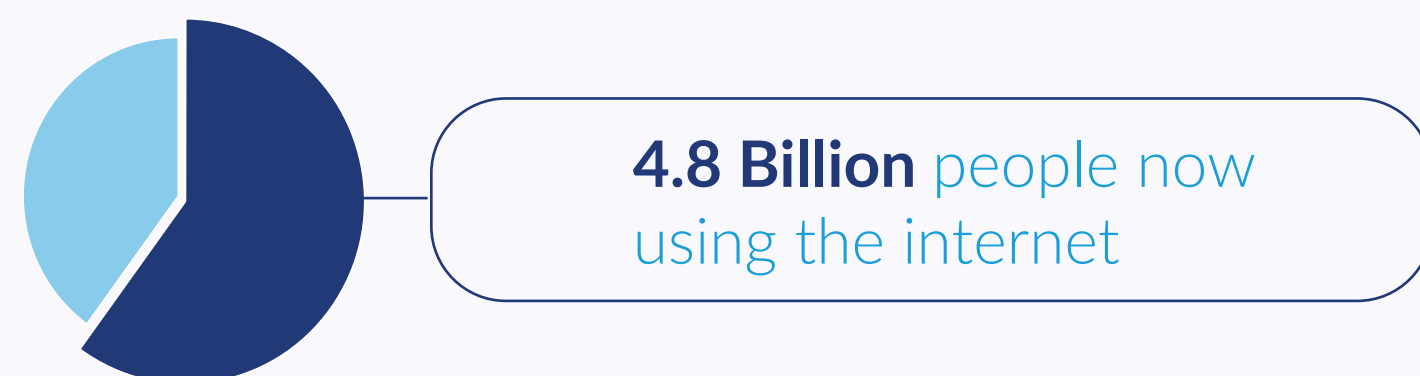
With over 4.8 billion people (61% of the global population) now using the internet, the shift towards an interconnected world has become undeniable[1]. 87% of consumers prefer to research products online before making a purchase, highlighting the increasing importance of digital touchpoints in the consumer journey[2]. And the typical social media user now spends roughly 2 hours and 24 minutes per day using social channels[3].

Welcome to the era of Consumer Intelligence

1 - Source: Statista.
2 - Source: Salesforce
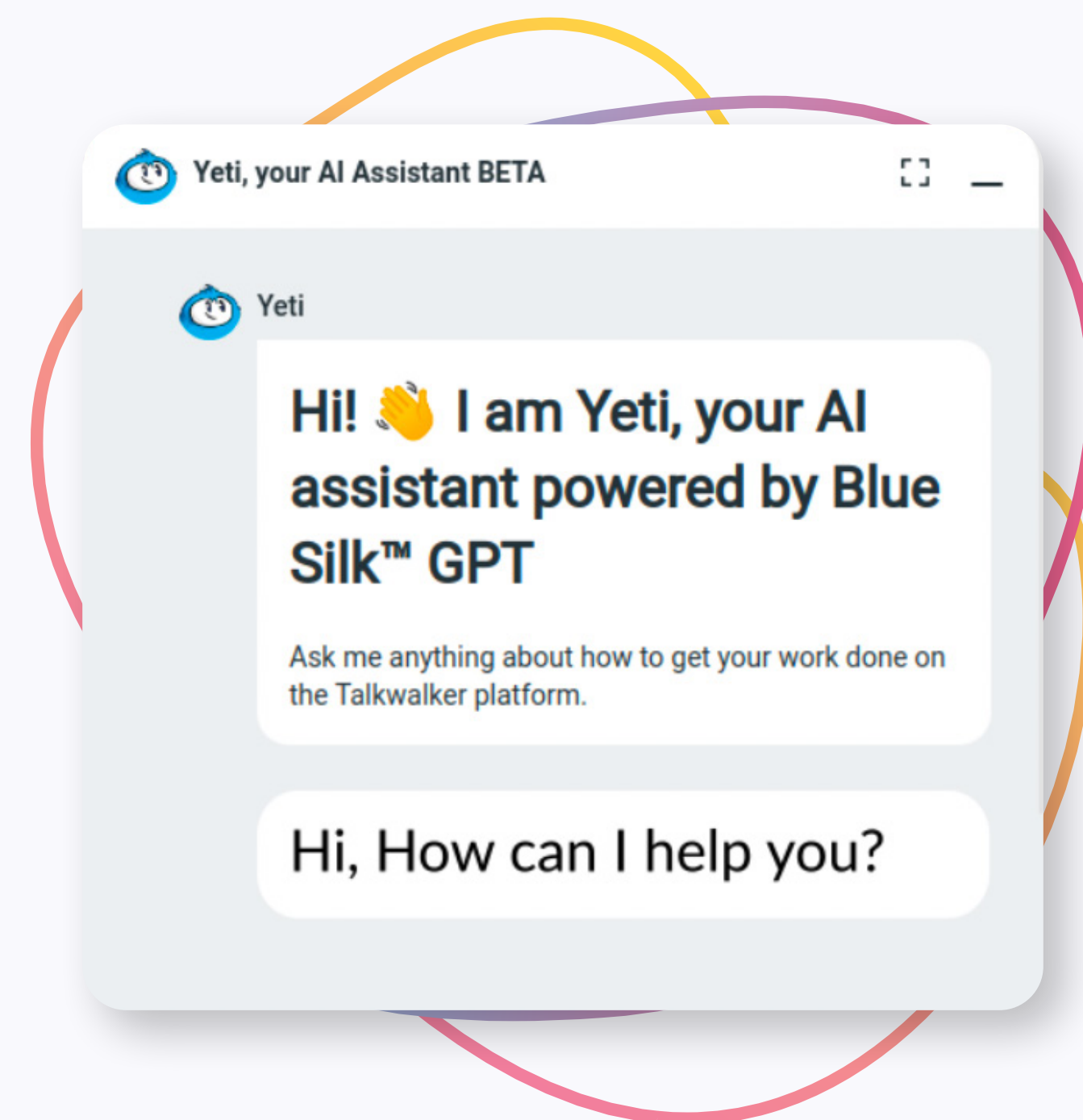3 - Source: Datareportal

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ABOUT

This paper explores the future of Consumer Intelligence.

Looking at how the changing dynamics of social and customer channels provide opportunities and challenges for organizations who need to make sense of data, and where innovation can take us next.

Yeti, your AI Assistant BETA

Yeti

Hi! 👋 I am Yeti, your AI assistant powered by Blue Silk™ GPT

Ask me anything about how to get your work done on the Talkwalker platform.

Hi, How can I help you?

"As the demand for digital insights has risen and market conditions have worsened, companies have had to adapt by tightening budgets, streamlining resources, and eliminating redundant tools. This has paved the way for a dual strategy.

On one front, insights departments are bolstered, breaking down data silos, and fostering data democratization within the organization.

On the other hand, AI-powered Consumer Intelligence is on the rise. Analyzing data at scale to make decisions in real-time, blending external sources such as social media, blogs, reviews, SEO and forums with internal sources like surveys, emails, and care."

Cara Buscaglia
Chief Innovation Officer

The role of Consumer Intelligence

At Talkwalker, we think of online data* as the world's largest focus group. One that operates in real-time.

Access to this diverse source of consumer opinion represents a tremendous opportunity for brands and agencies looking to create relevant content, products that speak to customer needs, and solutions that solve real world problems... but only if you can make sense of it!

Consumer Intelligence is a powerful practice that combines text analysis, data segmentation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and other sources of data to understand your customers and consumers. It also provides vital insights to shape and drive your communications, marketing and product development strategies.

It enables the integration of unsolicited and solicited feedback into a single platform, eliminating redundancy and breaking down data silos across your organization.

Social data is already powerful. However, you can enrich this data by triangulating it with other sources, both internal and external. Helping you gain a more comprehensive understanding of your opportunity areas and ultimately make more confident business decisions.

*(including, but not limited to social data)

Defining Consumer Intelligence

In the past, social listening primarily served as a reactive tool, allowing organizations to understand reactions to campaigns, initiatives, products, and services, as well as benchmark against competitors through basic keyword monitoring.
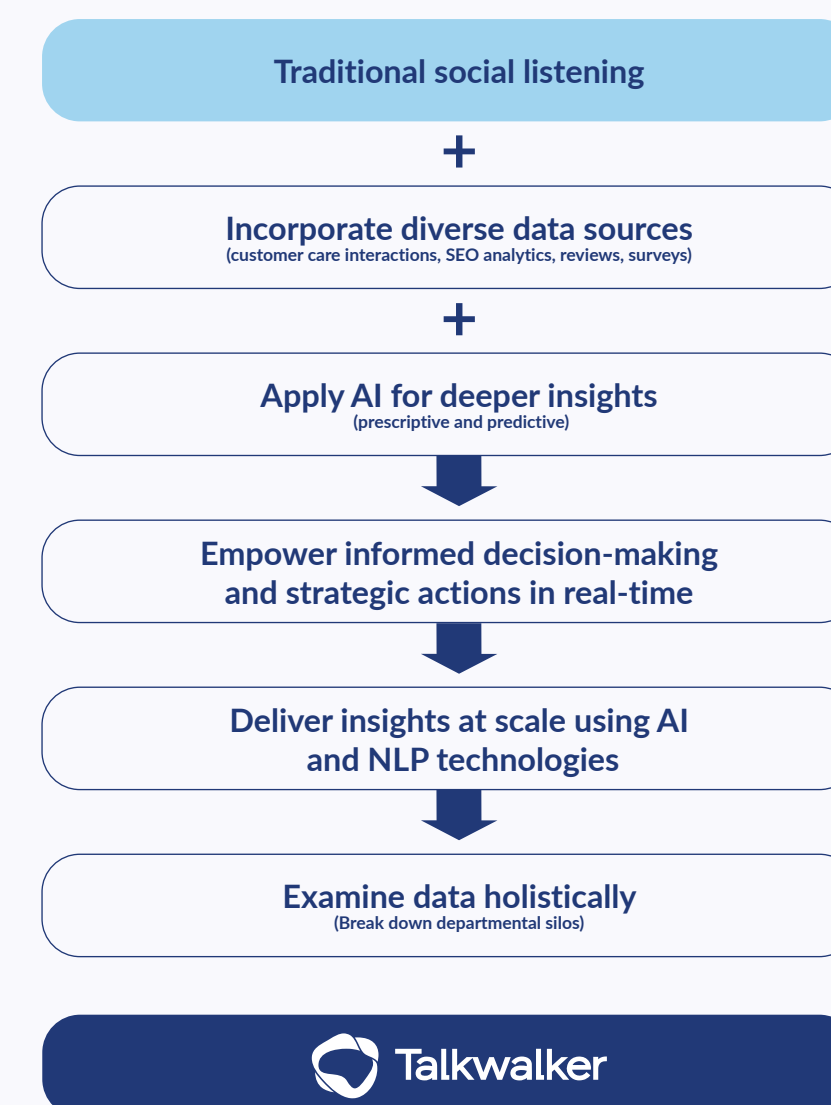
However, with the evolution of the industry, AI-powered Consumer Intelligence has revolutionized how organizations harness data. It enables you to go beyond traditional social listening by incorporating data from diverse sources like customer care interactions, SEO analytics, reviews, and surveys.

By applying AI, you can extract deeper insights, prescriptive and predictive, that directly influence outcomes. This shift empowers businesses to proactively leverage AI-powered Consumer Intelligence, driving informed decision-making and strategic actions in real-time.

Consumer Intelligence empowers you to go a step further by combining social data and consumer insights with other data sources like surveys, customer care centers, or reviews.

This allows you to deliver insights at scale across your organization by leveraging AI and Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies. By bringing these different platforms together, we can work faster and reduce redundancies in our tools.

Traditionally departments have operated in silos, but organizations are becoming smarter and more aware of the need to examine data holistically. They benefit from understanding the various segmentations associated with different use cases and departments, all while utilizing nuanced data platforms. This is the evolution we're witnessing in this field and is one Talkwalker is proud to be a market leader in.

Traditional social listening

+

Incorporate diverse data sources
(customer care interactions, SEO analytics, reviews, surveys)

+

Apply AI for deeper insights
(prescriptive and predictive)

Empower informed decision-making
and strategic actions in real-time

Deliver insights at scale using AI
and NLP technologies

Examine data holistically
(Break down departmental silos)

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"We transitioned from reactive social monitoring to a more proactive social listening approach. Now, AI-powered Consumer Intelligence is the next frontier"

Christophe Folschette
Partner & Founder

Talkwalker

Keys to a Successful transition from Passive Social Listening to Active Consumer Insights

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"We've been working with a major CPG company where the insights team collects business needs from innovation, product, communication, and even HR teams. They aggregate these needs to establish an infrastructure that covers the entire company, meeting goals and objectives for each brand and product portfolio. Planning this aspect is critical."

Yan Levieil
SVP EMEA

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Separating the signal from the noise

"Our approach to social listening data includes two key areas: Voice of the Consumer and Voice of the Brand" - says Thomas Earl, Leading voice of Consumer Analytics. Adidas monitors core company values like Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainability across different sport categories, engaging as an active player in the conversation in real time. "We democratize the data of Talkwalker dashboards with key senior stakeholders within the business"

When considering different capabilities and platforms, there are several factors to take into account.

➕ **The reliability of your data is crucial.** It forms the foundation for accurate insights and informed decision-making. It enables efficient resource allocation, reduces unnecessary costs associated with ineffective campaigns, and maximizes return on investment.

➕ **Complex data sources** often require a human component, making fully automated solutions challenging. Therefore strong customer service and professional service teams are of great importance to organizations when selecting platforms. It's important to be cautious of promises that seem too good to be true, such as one-click solutions or complete automation.

➕ **Clear objectives** and governance are necessary, along with robust support for global rollouts. More on this later.

➕ **A flexible and agile platform** capable of meeting local, regional, and global needs is vital. A platform built with flexibility, ease of use, and data quality as pillars of innovation is critical if it is to be successful in transforming consumer data into insights.

➕ **The right partners.** In the social listening space, there is a growing trend of specialized AI companies focused on specific use cases or industries. This has led to the development of partner ecosystems to support these niche areas. AI-powered Consumer Intelligence aims to provide a single source of truth, but no single tool can fulfill all needs. So choosing the right partner is crucial, one with a robust system that supports multiple integrations and specific niche use cases.

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Transitioning to Consumer Intelligence

Historically social listening has predominantly been used by marketing, communications and insights teams.

Today, transitioning to Consumer Intelligence platforms drives enterprise wide decision-making across a range of roles and areas. This includes customer experience (CX), customer engagement (including customer care), customer insights (including market research), marketing, innovation, sales, HR, product development and management.

Given the breadth of application here, the first and most challenging step when transitioning to Consumer Intelligence is to define your objectives.

Understanding your organization's digital maturity, data literacy and overall company objectives is essential. Global alignment is necessary to access and collaborate on data across different departments. Accessing tools, such as audience data or salesforce care data, requires alignment and collaboration.

The evolution of insights and data democratization often begins with small-scale implementations to introduce people and gradually expands to incorporate more data sources and leverage AI and data segmentation capabilities for ingesting unstructured data.

Five examples of objectives that our customer have set:

⊕ Gain deeper consumer insights for our marketing strategies

⊕ Improve customer engagement and experience

⊕ Accelerate innovation

⊕ Build and protect our reputation

⊕ Enhance decision-making with data-driven Insights by creating a center of excellence within our organization

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Aligning data to your key business drivers

The key is aligning with your primary business drivers and breaking down data silos within your organization.

By doing so, you can expedite the generation of valuable insights and enable critical business decisions based on similar information. This ability to deliver at scale across your organization is essential.
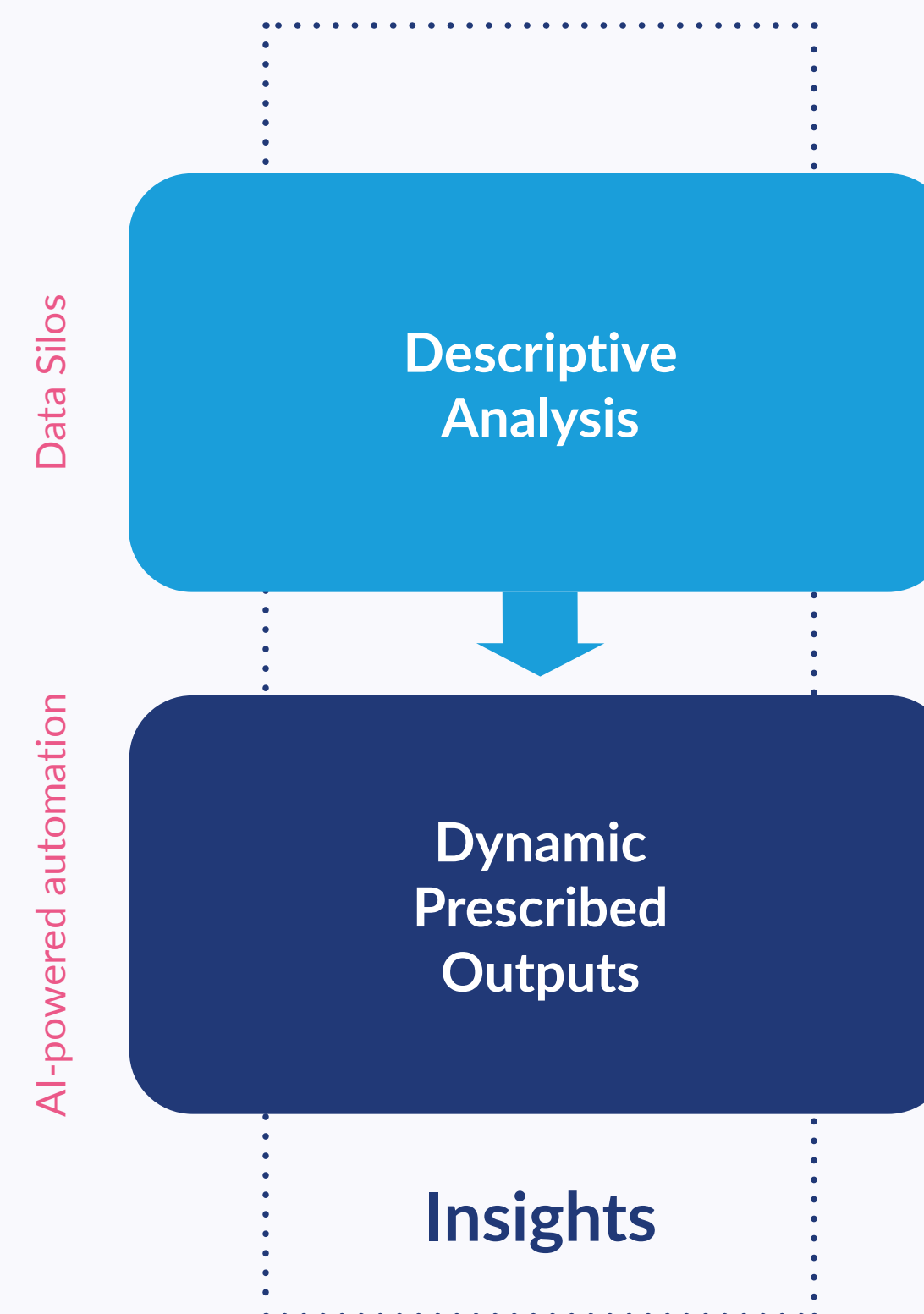
AI plays a crucial role in ensuring both data reliability and relevance. The team at Talkwalker continues to refine our own AI. For example, we have created a large language model using our own dataset, and will soon be launching a digital assistant and copilot, called Yeti, to surface qualitative and quantitative insights instantly.

Currently, most reports in our industry, whether from agencies or social listening providers, focus on descriptive analysis, simply presenting what has occurred. So, as AI-powered automation continues to advance, descriptive analysis, typically carried out by human analysts, will be seamlessly integrated into automated reports, greatly enhancing the speed, frequency, and depth of insights provided in your brand reports, competitive reports, and more.

This shift enables teams to operate within tighter budgets and frees them from time-consuming manual tasks to focus on strategic initiatives. While this transformation has already taken place in some fields, it presents an exciting opportunity to fully embrace the power of Consumer Intelligence.

So, the next significant step in the world of reporting will be a shift away from static descriptive reports to active dynamic prescribed outputs. Essentially AI will help you associate insights with specific use cases, provide guidance during crises and other business-critical situations.

Taking a crisis communications situation as an example, AI will go further. It will suggest alternative messaging if your current message is not landing. It will even provide tailored messages for key audience segments. Ultimately, AI in this context becomes a much more proactive partner in responding to your strategic objectives.

Data Silos

AI-powered automation

Descriptive Analysis

Dynamic Prescribed Outputs

Insights

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Not all data is equal

analysis of
Social Data

Creators
(e.g., influencers, media publishers, politicians)

Produce content

Consumers
(e.g., social media users)

Customers
(e.g., feedback channels, surveys)

Engage with content

While these advances underpinned by AI are encouraging, we must stay mindful that not all data is equal.

Let's look at social data as an example. Social data can be viewed through three distinct lenses: creators, consumers, and customers.

Creators refer to individuals such as media publishers, influencers, and politicians who generate content with wide reach and influence in their respective industries. For these creators, AI, such as Gpt, could play a significant role in generating appropriate responses or content.

Consumers, on the other hand, are individuals like you and us who post on social media platforms. Although not everyone actively posts, their engagement with creator content leaves valuable clues about their interests and preferences. These engagement signals act as context clues for understanding consumer behavior.

Lastly, customers represent the traditional feedback channels, such as surveys, used to gather insights from your core customer base.

When analyzing data, it's essential to break it down according to these lenses and further segment them based on relevant stakeholder groups.

For creators, this might involve categorizing social influencers, businesses, media publishers, politicians, and NGOs. Consumers can be segmented by demographics like foodies, millennials, and Gen Z. For customers, their segmentation will align with your existing customer segmentation practices.

To avoid feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data, it's vital to leverage a platform - like Talkwalker's - so you can view data through these different lenses and apply filters based on your specific business objectives and use cases. This way, you can effectively leverage the information available and align it with your desired outcomes.

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"Shifting the perspective to Consumer Intelligence, the focus is not solely on accumulating more data; it's about effectively utilizing the data you have."

Cara Buscaglia
Chief Innovation Officer

Talkwalker

The outcomes of great Consumer Intelligence

Data-driven Decision Making

Consumer Intelligence platforms drive enterprise wide decision-making across a range of roles and areas, including customer experience (CX), customer engagement (including customer care), customer insights (including market research), marketing, innovation, sales, HR and product development and management.

Data-driven decisions give you objective, evidence-based insights that help you better understand your target audiences, market trends, and competitive landscape.

Key benefits include:

⊕ **Accurate insights:** Helping you access accurate and up-to-date information about consumer preferences, behaviors, and sentiments

⊕ **Improved strategic planning:** Identify patterns, correlations, and trends that drive more effective strategies.

⊕ **Enhanced customer understanding:** Deep understanding of customer needs, preferences, and pain points.

⊕ **Competitive advantage:** Valuable insights into competitor activities, market trends, and customer sentiment.

⊕ **Risk mitigation:** Reduce the element of uncertainty and minimize risk.

⊕ **Cost optimization:** Optimize your resources by identifying areas of inefficiency and streamlining operations.

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"Talkwalker helps give us an understanding of the data that we then have to answer… Talkwalker doesn't tell us exactly what to do, but it gives us a baseline for it."

Director of Social Media Community
Square Enix

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Holistic Understanding of Consumer Behavior

Speed, Agility, and Democratization of Data

A true view of how your consumers behave, helps you understand the motivations, preferences, and actions of your audiences.

Leading to more informed decisions, better personalized marketing efforts, enhanced customer experiences, and staying ahead in a rapidly evolving market.

By putting the consumer at the center of your strategies, you can build stronger relationships, drive customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth.

Speed, agility, and democratization of data are essential facets of great Consumer Intelligence.

+ **Speed** means rapid access to data enables organizations to make quick adjustments to marketing campaigns, product features, and customer experiences.

+ **Being agile** allows you to adapt to changing trends, preferences and market conditions. It helps you embrace a culture of continuous learning and improvement. It lets you pivot quickly by identifying early warning signs, seizing emerging opportunities, and adjusting your strategies when necessary.

+ **Democratization** leads to inclusive decision making, empowering employees and teams across departments to contribute their perspectives based on consumer behavior data. It also encourages creativity by fostering a culture of curiosity and exploration.

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"To find out which product category to target and how to set Rimmel apart from competitors, we looked at competing brands and consumer insights using Talkwalker. As an example, we discovered that fans loved the Rimmel foundation. Given this, and what we know about what drives the category, we chose to mainly focus on the face and eye categories. As a result, we saw an increase in branded search and share-of-voice, and gained around 3x of our initial market share target within the first year of launch."

Cheska Teresa
Managing Director for Lion & Lion

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Collaboration and Integration

Actionable Insights and Recommendations

Great Consumer Intelligence paves the way for collaboration and integration within your business.

It promotes a shared understanding of consumers, breaks down silos, enables integrated decision making, coordinates marketing efforts, drives customer-centric innovation, supports continuous improvement, and enhances customer service.

By leveraging Consumer Intelligence as a foundation for collaboration, you not only align efforts but also maximize the value you deliver to your customers.

Data trust is vital.

Giving you insights that serve as a basis for making informed decisions, whether it's refining marketing strategies, optimizing product offerings, or improving customer experiences. Your data uncovers patterns, trends, and correlations that inform real decisions.

It also helps you understand audiences at a granular level - segmenting consumers based on demographics, preferences, behavior, or other relevant factors that influence your marketing efforts.

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"At HelloFresh, data is at the center of everything we do. It was only natural for us to turn to social listening to improve the performance and efficiency of our marketing and communications teams. Talkwalker has allowed us to unlock access to a much larger conversation around our brand than ever before."

Jordan Schultz
Social Media Manager, HelloFresh

Unified Consumer Feedback Stream

Consolidation and integration of feedback and insights from various sources and channels into a single, cohesive system brings significant benefits:

(+) Comprehensive view of customer sentiment

(+) Holistic understanding of customer preferences

(+) Centralized data for analysis and reporting

(+) Enhanced customer-centric decision making

(+) Real-time monitoring and response

(+) Integration with other systems and processes

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Innovation and Future Trends

By applying advanced analytics techniques to historical and current data, you can make accurate predictions about future outcomes.

These predictions enable proactive decision making, such as adjusting production levels, optimizing inventory, or planning marketing campaigns well in advance to capitalize on anticipated trends.

This can help drive better feedback-driven innovation, iterative product development and better prediction and anticipation.

"In a dynamic work environment it is vital for us to identify and understand customer opinions and trends early in order to enhance product development. Its easy-to-use platform and a range of useful tools make Talkwalker very valuable in our daily work."

Markus Czanta
Director Global Technical Marketing, Merck

Looking to the future

As we conclude this paper, we think it's also important to stay mindful that the tools and platforms you use must be run by a team of passionate and skilled people who have a well-defined and achievable innovation strategy.

While we're still in the information age, the pace of change will likely continue to accelerate. A symbiotic relationship between the needs of organizations and the competitive landscape of Consumer Intelligence specialists is vital for success.

As such our focus on the future is a crucial part of our mission here at Talkwalker.

For example Yeti is our digital assistant that's launching soon. It excels at describing the capabilities of our platform and enhancing its usability. It helps users understand metrics like engagement and guides them in constructing effective search queries.

However, the next step for Yeti is to go beyond mere information about the platform and delve into the story behind the data. It should be able to answer questions like "How do consumers perceive my brand?" This represents the second phase of its development.

While we already have prototypes of this functionality, it is expected to become fully integrated in the near future. As the industry evolves in this direction, it will be important to address potential biases within the models.

We must acknowledge that data can be complex and challenging to comprehend. So it's essential to recognize that humans need to guide AI and define its purpose. Although AI has tremendous potential, it will never fully replace human involvement in certain areas.

Over the next 12 months and even further into the next 3 to 5 years, AI will play a crucial role in providing descriptive analysis followed by prescription and recommendations. It will help democratize data within organizations, making it more accessible to everyone.

Rather than focusing solely on insights by specific channels, in the future we will seek a holistic view of consumer and market insights across different channels. While many talk about it, implementation remains a significant hurdle in creating a singular consumer feedback stream - something Talkwalker and our partners are striving for.

"Another significant shift is the need to move beyond analyzing data by individual channels. While that is still important, the future lies in creating a unified consumer feedback stream.

Businesses aim to gather solicited and unsolicited customer feedback across all channels, aligning it with their specific business units and objectives."

Cara Buscaglia
Chief Innovation Officer

"Moving forward, the ultimate goal is for Yeti to provide recommendations on the right insights to drive action across the organization.

This will involve understanding consumer sentiments and preferences, and then translating that knowledge into targeted messaging."

Alberto Hernando
Director, Product Management

Thanks for reading

Special thanks goes to Cara Buscaglia - Chief
Innovation Officer at Talkwalker for providing the key
insights and thinking for this paper.

We hope you found the thinking useful and
welcome questions or feedback should you wish
to discuss any of the topics covered in this report
in more detail.

Contact us

Ready to dive deeper into the future of Consumer Intelligence?

Explore the best Consumer Intelligence platform available. Unlock the potential of your data and gain a competitive edge in the digital landscape.

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