



SHIPYARD
ENGINEERING BRAND LOVE

TAKING THE PULSE OF BRAND LOVE

A COMPREHENSIVE MEASUREMENT SOLUTION



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SUMMARY

Blake Williams, Senior Director of Data & Analytics, The Shipyard, writes that the future of Brand Love measurement has arrived in the form of Pulse:

- Virtually all available measurements of Brand Love are focused exclusively on social listening and survey data, ignoring more direct consumer action
- Pulse, the newly developed measurement tool by The Shipyard, incorporates not only what consumers say about a brand but has a dedicated focus to what consumers do — the actions they take that indicate Brand Love

WHY IT MATTERS

The idea of trusting only what consumers say is outdated and ignores massive data sources to which all brands have access. In a world where there are countless ways for consumers to interact with a brand, Pulse measures all of them to give a clear picture of how much consumers love a brand, and key areas that brands should emphasize to further develop that love.

TAKEAWAYS

- Limitations in survey data and inconsistent motives on social media have created major gaps in current evaluations of Brand Love
- The actions that consumers take in relation to a brand are often more indicative of their true feelings and have a measurable impact on that brand's bottom line
- Pulse is a customizable tool that combines disparate data sources — inclusive of survey and social listening data but extending to additional organic social behavior, paid media response data, website data, emails and more — into one holistic and prescriptive score

- The five subcomponents of Pulse — Attraction, Intrigue, Connection, Affection, and Passion — provide a granular view into where in the journey to Brand Love consumers may be falling off and allow for strategies to be developed to address those issues

CHALLENGES & WATCH-OUTS

- A comprehensive Brand Love measurement, like Pulse, requires a comprehensive strategic response. Media alone won't necessarily lead to an improved Pulse score, as owned and earned channels are also critical in driving improved Brand Love
- Proper access to and organization of data feeds is required for an accurate Pulse score. Data outputs are only as strong as the data inputs being used, so ensuring proper structure is a key to success
- While surveys and social listening create an incomplete picture, they remain a critical part of the overall measurement that Pulse provides and should not be ignored



Since the evolution of modern branding in the 1950s, marketers everywhere have been asking the same question: Do customers love my brand?

That's the wrong question.

Simply asking if consumers love your brand will lead you to analyze what people say about your brand. But love is also an action. If someone loves your brand, they don't just say it, they show it. And they show it in a number of ways.

So, how can we appropriately measure love, which is arguably one of the most complex emotions on the planet? By answering a question that we should have been asking from the start: What actions show me my brand is loved? After all, actions speak louder than words.

That was the question that led to the development of **Pulse, A Brand Love Formula from The Shipyard.**

Pulse provides a holistic view into the acts of love consumers take toward a brand while also factoring in their expressed sentiment. It considers the entire complexity of emotion and action that constitutes love. All the things that you do or say or feel to express love — all the things that quicken your heart rate — are measured.

The goal of this measure is the same as many of its predecessors, but the process is much more comprehensive.



That's not to say there hasn't been considerable work in the area. Young & Rubicam revolutionized the space when they developed the BrandAsset Valuator in 1993, propelling the industry into a new lens of brand measurement. Since then, similar and complementary tools have been developed, but the focus has largely been on aggregated brand sentiment survey analysis, advanced social listening data analysis or some combination of the two.

However, the industry has zeroed in on what consumers say at the expense of factoring in what they do. This has resulted in indexes and scores that only tell part of the Brand Love story, capturing only the surface layer of love.

Martin and Morich hit the core point in their 2011 work, calling for a new model of consumer behavior when they posited that “the majority, if not all, of human behavior either begins as an unconscious process or occurs completely outside of conscious awareness. These automatic processes ... impact attitudes, beliefs and goals without engaging consumers' conscious minds.” ([source](#))

If consumers can't always articulate their motivations around brand-based decision making, why would we rely only on their ability to self-report those thoughts?



The focus on what consumers say via survey and social listening data is a classic case of the Streetlight Effect — focusing only on what is easiest to see. The social listening data is readily available (from certain channels) and there are numerous tools to efficiently provide sentiment analysis. Similarly, marketers have access to several survey tools and partners to facilitate that data collection. However, if we consider only the most accessible data, we drastically bias our result.

Pulse doesn't just look at what's under the streetlight, but rather analyzes in broad daylight. Survey data and social listening are key parts of the story, but to accurately capture if consumers are falling in love with a brand, you also must account for the actions they take.

Certainly, what people publicly say about a brand — either online or in survey responses — is valuable when evaluating if that brand is loved by consumers. But it ignores the innate and unconscious decision making we all undertake every day as part of human nature. Ignoring this automaticity paints an incomplete picture of consumers and their multifaceted feelings about a brand. ([source](#))

GAPS IN CURRENT EVALUATIONS

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

The pitfalls of consumer surveys are well documented. Ever since researchers have been analyzing survey data, they've been striving to reduce inaccuracies and limitations of the process.

While the considerable work by the research community has increased the substantial value in brand evaluation and directional analysis that surveys provide, significant gaps persist.



Response rate, biased choice behavior, collection method variance and the incidental nature of cost-effective survey research all introduce significant gaps in the full picture of Brand Love. Often out of a sense of obligation to the researchers or compulsion to explain our innate automaticity, consumers may fabricate (consciously or subconsciously) a brand evaluation when none exists [Mellens, Dekimpe and Steenkamp, 1996].

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Generally, humans are not as accurate (or truthful) in explaining our feelings and value judgments. Additionally, even if those judgments are accurate, they may not be as valuable as researchers assume.

Many factors go into a brand engagement and often variables outside of attitude will be the determining factor. For example, I personally would give very favorable perceptions of athletic apparel giant Nike. I have purchased many of their products over the years and associate the brand with high quality, innovation and style. However, as a 34-year-old soon-to-be father of two who rarely makes purchases for himself, I have not bought a new Nike product in multiple years.

In this instance, my survey responses would indicate that I have Brand Love for Nike. But my actions say differently. Surveys alone are not enough.

INCONSISTENT MOTIVES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

If the introduction of a third-party researcher, among other things, becomes problematic when

relying on survey data, why not rely on what consumers say of their own accord on social media?

Like survey data, a proper social listening strategy is a critical part of analyzing your brand's position in the marketplace and perception by consumers. It too, however, creates an incomplete picture of those consumers.

Often, as in survey data, that picture is heavily biased by what the artist (consumer) wants others to perceive about them.

As Schlosser concluded in their 2019 literature review of self-disclosure vs. self-presentation on social media, these platforms have “features that discourage disclosure. ... Those posting on social media have become performers who present an edited version of themselves”

In this way, a singular reliance on social listening as a measure of Brand Love is as flawed as survey data.

The industry's overreliance on social listening for this purpose makes sense. As this information is even more readily available than survey data, it's the most extreme example of the Streetlight Effect in the Brand Love measurement space.

Amplifying this Streetlight Effect is that, while it may feel like all consumers are active on social media, that's not necessarily the case. Different generations (and individuals, for that matter) engage with social media differently, and some members of all generations either abstain from social media or do not leverage it for brand interactions in any way. ([source](#))

Clearly, social listening alone is not enough.

So, if surveys and social listening are only filling in part of the Brand Love picture, how do we finish the puzzle? We stop relying on just what consumers say they'll do and incorporate all the actions consumers can take to show their love.



A HOLISTIC MEASURE: PULSE

The gaps in our ability to measure Brand Love are apparent. That's why The Shipyard, in collaboration with The Ohio State University Fisher School of Business (OSU), has developed Pulse.

Taking into account a holistic view of all the ways that consumers can show that they love a brand, Pulse is a customizable and brand-specific tool that combines disparate data sources — inclusive of survey and social listening data but extending to additional organic social behavior, paid media response data, website data, emails and more — into one holistic and prescriptive score.

Across our five identified layers of Brand Love — Attraction, Intrigue, Connection, Affection, Passion — there are more than 80 total data points (and growing) to consider. Complementary to a brand's core KPIs, these data points are designed to capture all the ways Brand Love can be measured.

Robust data sets are collected over time and run through data analysis to isolate the most impactful components for a specific brand. As an outcome, Pulse provides a comprehensive score as well as scoring for all five layers of Brand Love. In this way, Pulse not only quantifies Brand Love but offers a clear road map of where a brand is excelling and where it's falling short. This scoring system has clear strategic planning applications across paid, owned and earned channels.

PARTNERING WITH A TOP 10 FINANCIAL SERVICES PROVIDER

To refine the process and put Pulse through a full QA process, The Shipyard has partnered with CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA), the nation's eighth-largest financial services provider.

Unsatisfied with relying solely on Brand Health surveys and eager to increase their Brand Love to match their lofty position in the industry, CLA provided the perfect test case for Pulse.

Alpha testing of Pulse with CLA has included the ingestion of 21 different data sources (14 paid media sources, six owned sources and one earned source), each with multiple key metrics. Concurrently, The Shipyard and OSU are developing an industry-specific survey to fully inform additional data ingestion.

The result has been a comprehensive look at the love consumers have for CLA, and the identification of areas where love could be better nurtured. Over time — and with the ingestion of data from others in the industry — this already critical information will become even more valuable and ensure that CLA becomes the most-loved brand in financial services.





CONCLUSION

The marketing industry's fixation on Brand Love is well founded. But a focus on the wrong question has resulted in methods to measure that concept that are far from comprehensive.

With Pulse, The Shipyard is changing that.

Yes, volunteered brand sentiment is important. But the industry has fallen into a state of overreliance on it. When identifying Brand Love in your consumers, the primary focus should not be only on what they say. It must also emphasize what they do.

Up until now we've only been measuring feelings.

It's time to stop measuring only expressed consumer sentiment (what they say) and incorporate the full Brand Love journey (what they do). Pulse fills this gap in the marketplace by accounting for all the ways that consumers can show love and creating a holistic score across all those data sets.

Love is more than an emotion, it's also an action, and The Shipyard is committed to measuring it as such. Welcome to the future of measuring Brand Love: Pulse.



Learn more about Pulse and if it's right for your company's measurement needs.
pulse.theshipyard.com





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Blake Williams oversees performance media strategy for digital and social media campaigns, with an emphasis on ensuring media is launched in a way that ingests actionable data. Over his career, he has led performance media reporting efforts for clients in a variety of categories and media spend, including QSR, CPG and Healthcare. Over this time, he has developed an expertise in surfacing actionable insights from large datasets and providing strategic recommendations based on real-world consumer behavior, allowing clients to efficiently achieve their goals.



The Shipyard builds performance-driven brands that audiences love by applying modern mindsets to established models, fueling more courageous and more validated brand and marketing decisions. By harmonizing millions of data points, we create a deep, personalized understanding of your consumers to predict their behaviors and aspirations. Our work consistently results in growth for our clients with higher acceleration and lower costs than virtually anyone in the industry. The agency serves iconic brands such as Thrivent, Visit California, CAS, In-N-Out Burger, Weleda, Donato's, California Wine Institute, Serengeti, NCR, SDG&E, Co-op Financial Services, Protective Insurance, VSP, CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA), San Diego Tourism Authority and many others.



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We are also proud, active members of Worldwide Partners, Inc. — a global, independent agency network providing additional resources and real-time access to over 65 agencies in more than 40 countries.