

People talk – about the weather, the news, the neighbors. They also talk about products, services and the brands associated with them. It seems the more critical people are about something, the more talkative they become.

While the days of gabbing over the back fence are not gone, the electronic age has vastly expanded the chatter zone to include blogs, online consumer reviews and techniques for creative self-expression like the uploading of photos or posting of short films. Consumers are unleashing a torrent of opinion about nearly everything nowadays, presenting advertisers with an opportunity to access the consumer mindset like never before, and TBWA\Company Group in Amsterdam has developed a great idea to exploit this.

"BrandGossip" is a proprietary research tool designed by the Amsterdam office to make the hitherto unavailable thoughts of consumers accessible to marketers in real time and unmediated by outside analysis. The information is raw, immediate, and invaluable to those who would seek insight into emerging business opportunities or threats.

"By intervening in time, you can extinguish a fire before it reaches the front page of De Telegraaf," says Director of Innovation Jeroen de Bakker, of the propensity for negative opinion to spread like, well, gossip.

BrandGossip works like a search engine: you enter a brand name and it searches content by gathering RSS feeds from a myriad of sources relevant to the brand. The results are indexed according to their topicality and displayed according to categories, e.g., blogs, news sites, auction sites and photo and video sites like Flickr and YouTube.

The resulting information can aid understanding of consumer behavior or allow an agency to monitor a campaign in progress, paving the way for stronger agency initiatives and better strategies.

"With BrandGossip we are showing that we understand Web 2.0," says Jeroen de Bakker. "And because we're making clients aware of what is happening with their brand online, we can also advise them how to shape their brand in this new landscape."

Clients are enthusiastic about the results, TBWA\Company Group is preparing quotes for client-specific versions of the search tool, and agencies within our network are anxious to launch their own versions of BrandGossip. Its technology is continuously improving to keep us abreast of marketplace developments into the future.

It was said of Frank Sinatra that this was his world and we just live in it. The same may be said of today's consumer, who undoubtedly controls the marketplace. But with innovations like BrandGossip, co-existing is getting a whole lot easier.

To check out the Dutch version of BrandGossip, go to www.brandgossip.com. It is in English for demonstration purposes.

For more information on how you can institute BrandGossip in your region, contact: jeroen.de.bakker@tbwa.nl

