KSA Banking Sentiment Index

2023

pwc

In collaboration with

DataEQ

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Foreword

While the COVID-19 pandemic has receded and the once prominent risks have become less visible, organisations and people continue to navigate through the most transformative period in history. From the rapid technological advancements, socio-political tensions and significant economic shocks to the cultural shifts impacting consumer mindsets and behaviours - *disruption* has become synonymous with today's business environment.

These macro influences have a sustained relevancy within the insurance landscape. Insurance, by its very nature puts consumers at the centre of anticipating the unanticipated at their point of purchase. Insurers need to be cautious of adding complexities to an already complex decision making process. In today's challenging environment, consumers are foregoing brands that fail to remove friction before their purchase experience or to meet them at critical moments that matter across their lifecycle, according to our latest Global Consumer Insights Pulse Surve ories.

Fortunately, organis ions, while meeting the ever-changing n uccess - advancing their digital and cust investments, breaking down busir ervices their customers actually v s the spectrum of disruption?

TBC

The Evolving Custor

Through the unsolici this year's Insurance Sentiment Index, in igital transformation trends shaping the ir honic support, praising staff for thei l friction points. While human touch remain e, the cost associated with high-touch expe tions that take customers on a journey that educates and motivates them to self-service through the relevant digital touchpoints.

The overall sentiment, while showing a significant improvement, highlights the need for insurers to focus on creating greater alignment between human-centred and tech-enabled systems as a way to empower your staff and your consumers with the necessary tools, information, technology and support for their decision-making and experience with your brand.

It will not be enough to take a piecemeal approach to your digital and customer transformation journey. To thrive as a customer champion in the coming years, insurers need to focus on five interconnected and mutually reinforcing strategic imperatives: become a digital ecosystem orchestrator; tap into customer-centric ecosystems to create new value; demonstrate your ethos around ESG in your actions more than your words ; build an outcome-orientated organisation and hyper-focus your talent strategy to prepare employees to adapt, stretch and grow in response to the constant industry changes.

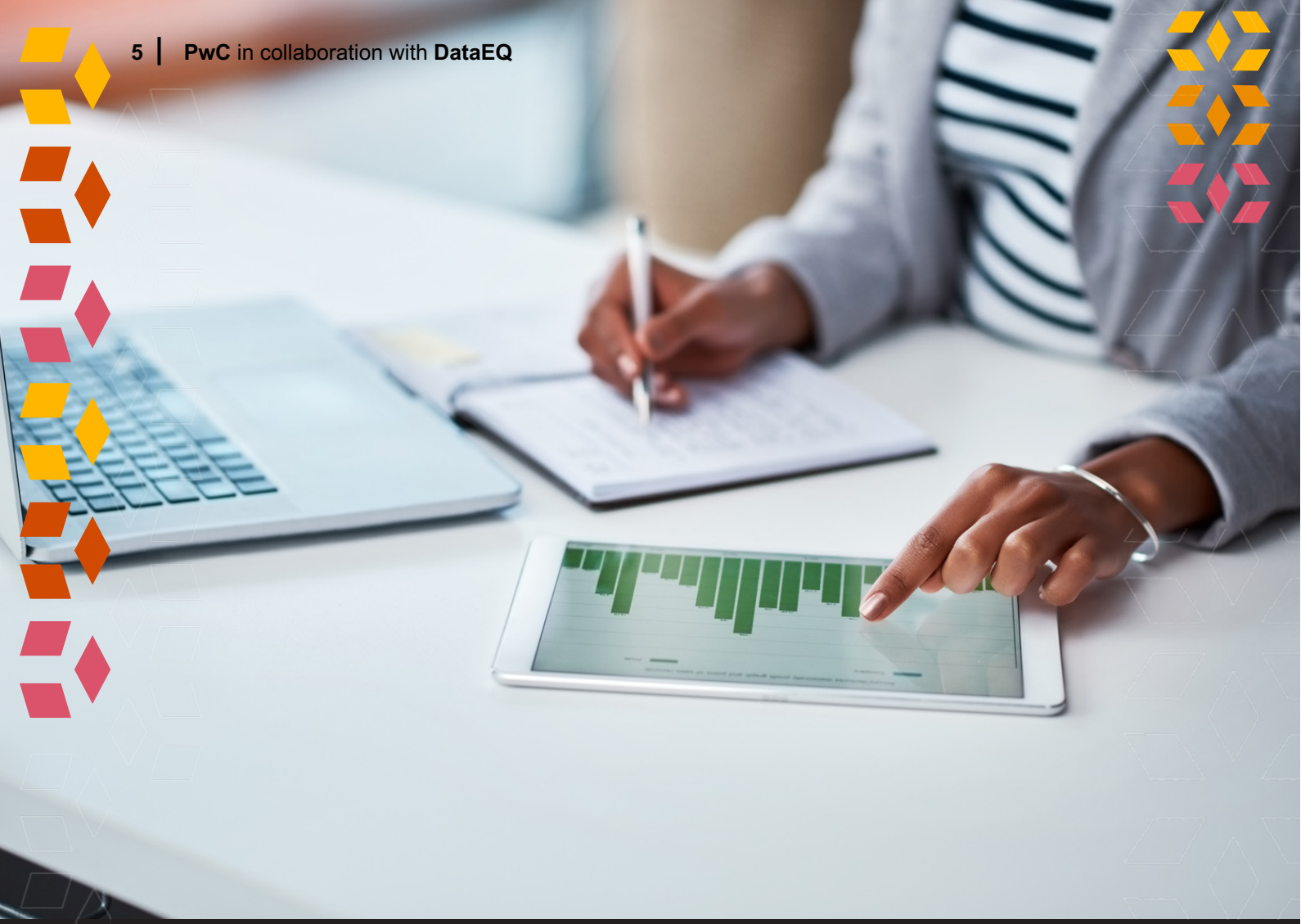
Introduction

PwC has collaborated with DataEQ to analyze the customer sentiment towards seven leading banks within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in order to gain a greater understanding of the consumer perceptions and experiences shaping the industry's reputation and risk profile. This year's index tracked over 5 million posts on X (formerly known as Twitter) – an increase of 13% from last year's 4.4 million – for the period of 1 May 2022 to 30 April 2023. These posts were then processed using DataEQ's proprietary method which uses a unique combination of Crowd and AI technology.

Overall, the industry shows signs of improvement, with an 11.3 percentage point increase in Net Sentiment compared to 2022. This uptick can be largely attributed to a 9.1 percentage point increase in reputational Net Sentiment that arose from media reports on positive financial results for several banks, engagement with CSI initiatives, as well as benefits and loyalty programmes. However, banks are still grappling with lingering challenges and feeling the negative impact of consumer criticisms, mainly aimed at slow service and lengthy processing times.

This index taps into an often-overlooked source of truth – unsolicited social media feedback – providing a quantifiable measure of the industry's performance in areas such as pricing, products, customer service, and risk-related conversation. This raw, unfiltered data illuminates real consumer pain points and the areas where banks are excelling. By analyzing key drivers of consumer satisfaction and frustration, the study aims to assess how well Saudi banks are meeting customer expectations in terms of service and experience. With these insights, stakeholders will be better equipped for swift action and the development of long-term strategic plans that will likely see their public sentiment, and profits, soaring to even greater heights.

[1] The DataEQ Crowd is a proprietary crowd sourcing platform comprising a network of trained and vetted local language contributors. The full DataEQ methodology can be found in the last section of this report.



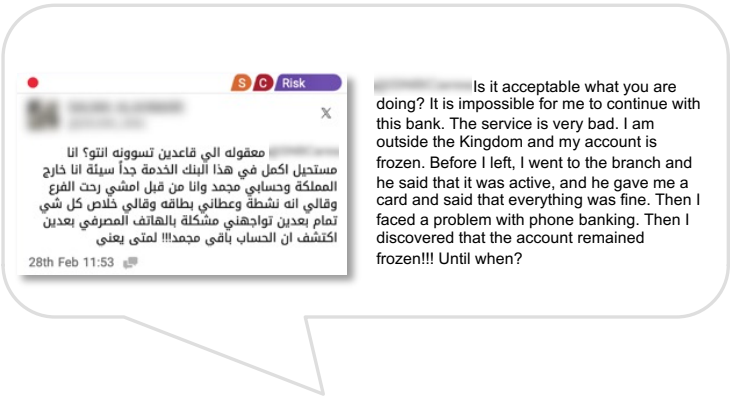
01

Industry benchmark

Rising social media adoption in KSA

Out of a total population of 35.97 million, an impressive 99% of Saudis have access to the internet. Social media use has also increased, with 28.81 million people (79.3% of the population) actively engaging on these platforms. This marks an uptick from 2022's 71.9% adoption rate. On average, these active users spend three hours daily on social media[2].

Net Sentiment: Industry comparison



28.81 million
active social media users in KSA, the equivalent of

79.3% of total internet users

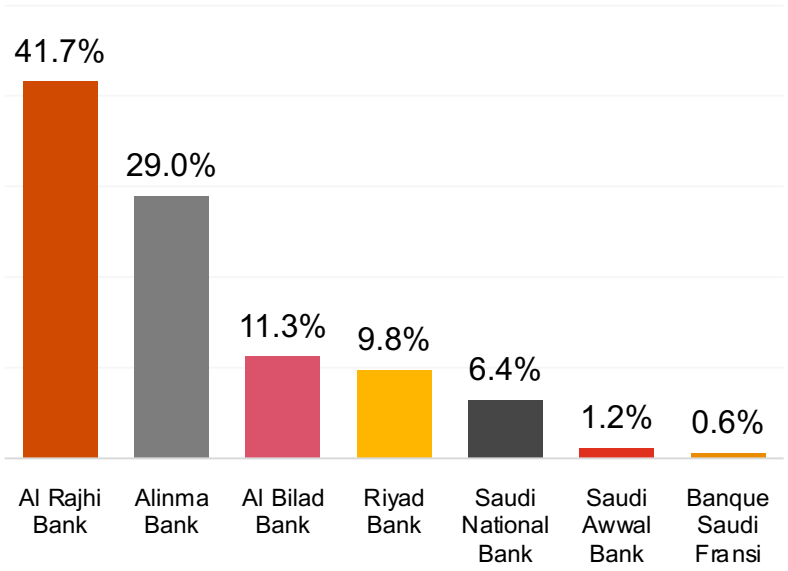
3hrs 24 mins
average time spent on social media

[2] https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/saudi-arabia-social-media-statistics/

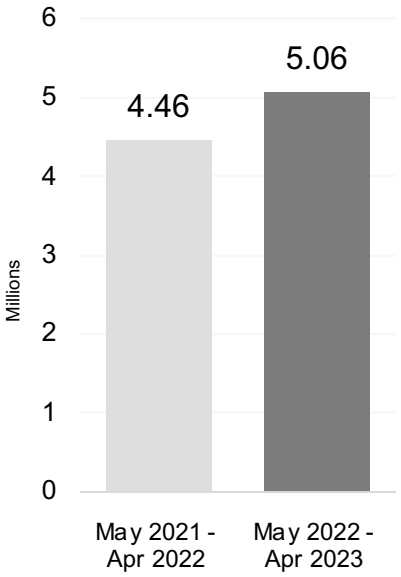
Consumer conversation about Saudi banks sees a 13.6% increase from 2022

Compared to last year, consumer conversations about Saudi banks rose by 13.6%, with mentions increasing from 4.45 million between May 2021 and April 2022 to 5.06 million for the same period in 2022-2023. This rise indicates a steady growth in social media engagement with Saudi banking brands. Al Rajhi led the industry's share of voice with 41.7% and had the highest number of unique authors interacting with its brand.

Percentage share of voice



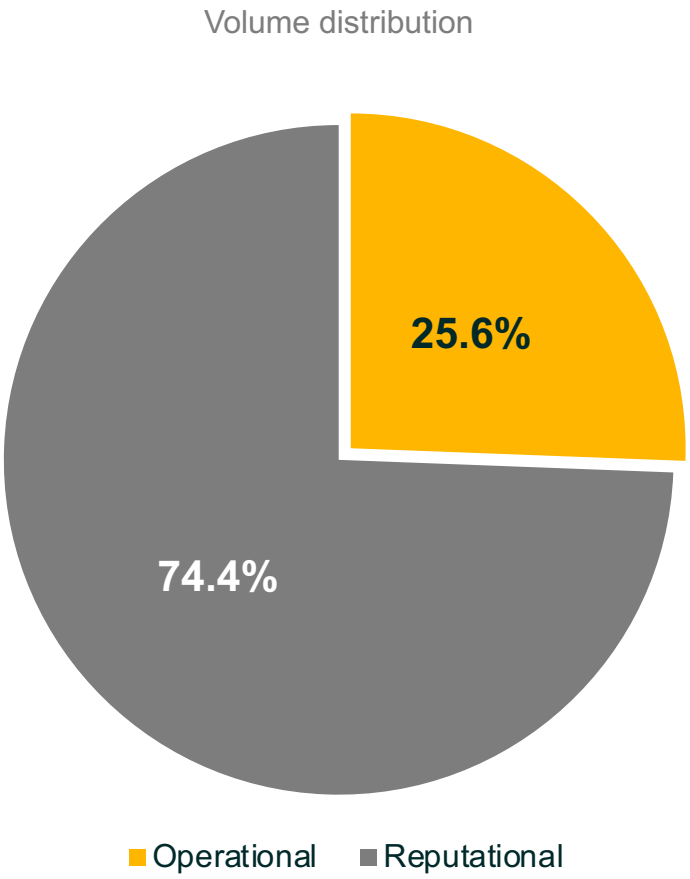
Share of voice



Conversation analysis

Net Sentiment towards Saudi banks is shaped by two fundamental kinds of conversations: operational and reputational[3]. By dissecting conversations into these two distinct categories, industry stakeholders can better understand the factors driving Net Sentiment and tailor their strategies accordingly.

[3] **Operational conversation:** Authors who are in a customer journey with the brand. Includes six stages – not a customer, pre-customer, new customer, current customer, churning customer, and post-customer.
Reputational conversation: Consumer or press conversation that does not directly relate to being in a customer journey with a brand. This includes sponsorship, campaign, journalistic and other reputational content. It does not include conversation about the bank's services.

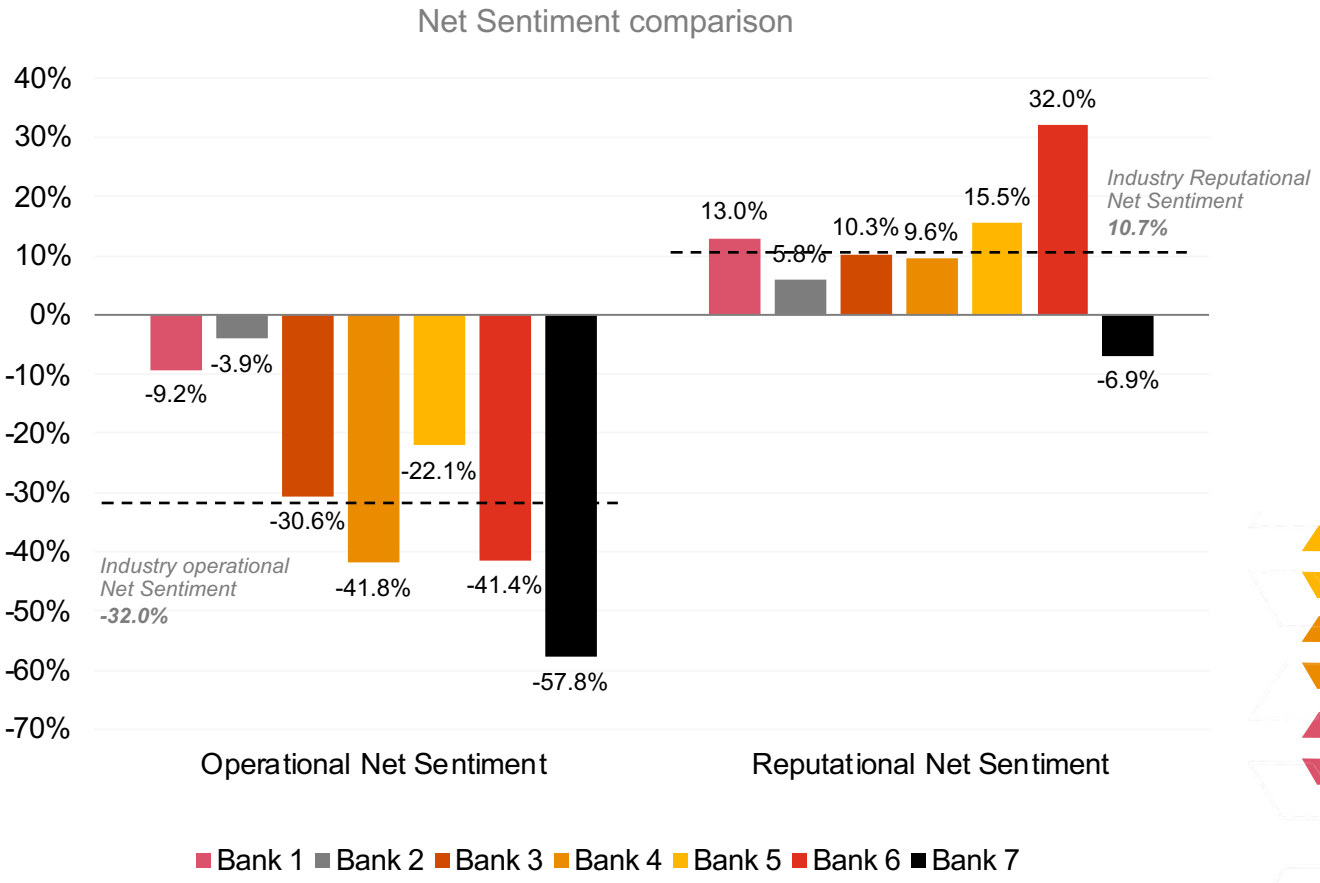


Operational conversations, focusing on customer interactions at various stages of their journey with the bank, constituted 25.6% of total mentions. These conversations spanned from initial inquiries to ongoing service experiences and predominantly revolved around account-related issues and service quality.

Reputational conversations represented a significant 74.4% of the total mentions. These discussions centered on brand promotions, advertised services, and corporate social responsibility activities, explicitly excluding any dialogues connected to service quality, pricing, or other operational considerations.

Reputational performance masks operational deficiencies

In acquiring and retaining customers, consumer sentiment plays a vital role. Banks must focus on maintaining a positive Net Sentiment by knowing where they are doing well, and where they are falling short, so they can address customer complaints and expand on opportunities to improve their services and products.



Operational Net Sentiment is conversation about the customer experience.
Reputational Net Sentiment is conversation driven by brand's own campaigns, CSR activities and press.

Both operational and reputational conversations exert a significant influence on Net Sentiment. Social media platforms often serve as outlets for customer complaints, especially when conventional communication channels fall short. As a result, operational conversations frequently skew towards the negative. While some banks have effectively harnessed reputational Net Sentiment, boosting the quality of operational interactions holds substantial promise for elevating overall Net Sentiment.

Operational conversation

Operational mentions were predominantly negative during the reporting period. The primary issue centered on turnaround time for resolving customer issues. Customers frequently expressed dissatisfaction with delays in activating their accounts and transferring funds, compounded by lackluster customer service responsiveness. Another significant area of concern was the speed and reliability of the banks' digital platforms. Users reported several problems such as sluggish mobile apps, slow-loading websites, and transactional glitches. These complaints also encompassed issues like unauthorized payments and billing irregularities that further lowered overall industry Net Sentiment.

Despite these challenges, the industry witnessed some positive operational conversation. Customers made favorable comparisons between banks, particularly in terms of loan offerings, interest rates, and customer service quality. Technological efficiency played a role here as well, with authors praising the usability of mobile apps and applauding banks for swiftly resolving their problems. There were also examples of customers expressing appreciation for the conduct and competence of banking staff across various branches, highlighting the impact of employee training and culture on operational performance. Specialized services like cashback rewards and international transfers also appeared as topics that bolstered positive operational Net Sentiment.

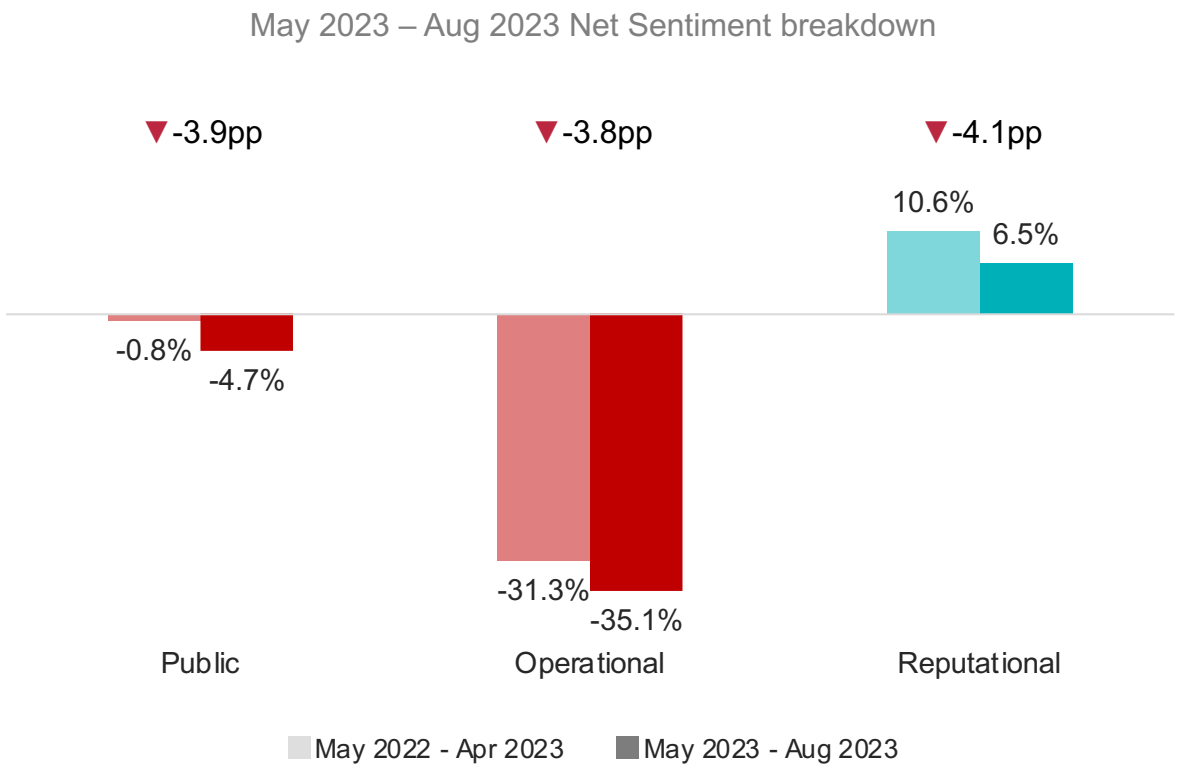
Reputational conversation

Conversations in this category often centered on banks' contributions to corporate social responsibility initiatives, charitable donations, and environmental sustainability projects. These philanthropic efforts generated the most positive sentiment for the industry at large. Additionally, strong financial performance indicators, such as increased profits and stock price growth, were published online and generated significant positivity from the public. Innovative service offerings, special offers, competitions, and partnerships with prominent football clubs also drew widespread praise on social media.

Negative reputational mentions were few in number, and typically involved allegations of discriminatory actions or banks' alleged involvement in unethical business practices.

Net Sentiment improves across the industry

The Saudi banking industry recorded notable improvements in all three Net Sentiment categories compared to last year's report that saw overall Public Net Sentiment improve by 11.3 percentage points.

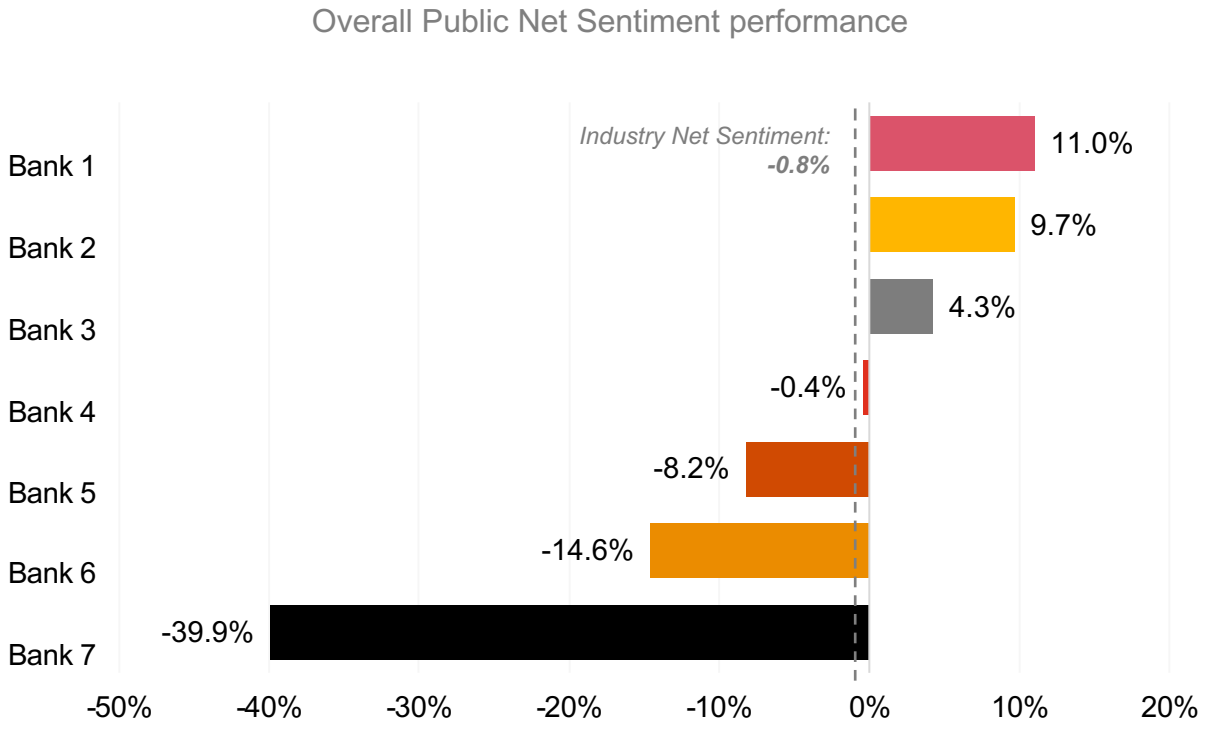


Operational Net Sentiment, which made up 25.6% of the total industry conversation, saw an 18.4pp increase, reaching a Net Sentiment of -31.3%. Despite the progress, there remains areas for operational performance enhancement, notably in service-related issues. This is evidenced by the fact that consumers often turned to social media for solutions when traditional communication channels, like call centers, fell short.

Reputational Net Sentiment was net positive at 10.6%, marking a 9.1pp increase from the previous analysis period. The industry effectively used brand promotions, service offers, and various campaigns to foster positive customer engagement and elevate awareness.

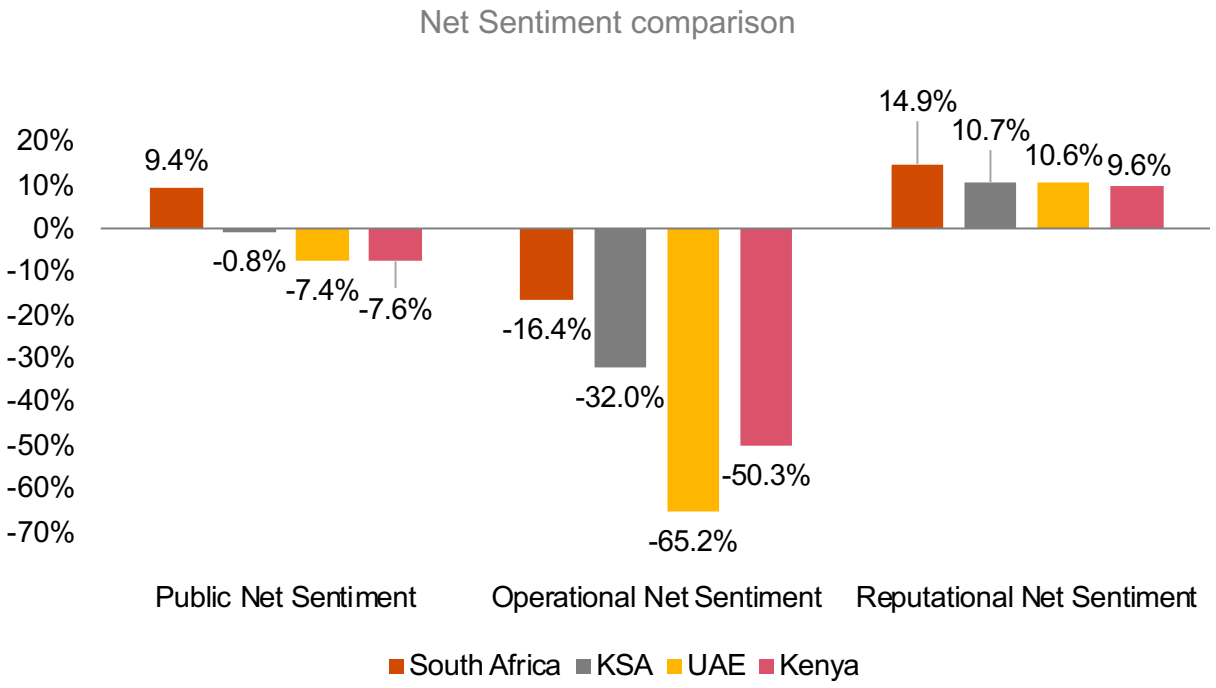
Industry average Net Sentiment is -0.8%

Across Saudi banks, the average overall Net Sentiment was -0.8%. The top three banks achieved positive Net Sentiment scores, while the remaining four banks all registered negative sentiment. A significant disparity of 50.9 percentage points was observed between the highest and lowest scoring banks, indicating a diverse range of customer experiences and operational efficiencies among the competitors.



KSA banking ranks second in Net Sentiment versus other markets measured by DataEQ

KSA secured a second-place ranking when evaluated against other markets measured by DataEQ. For the 2023 review period, Saudi banking outperformed the UAE, Kenya and the UK but fell short of South Africa in overall, operational, and reputational Net Sentiment categories. Service-related discussions were a common source of negativity across all these territories. Reputational Net Sentiment was positive in all countries thanks to the favorable reception of banks' brand-driven content, promoted services, and CSI activities.



Consumers attracted by well-priced products but let down by customer service and digital platforms

Over 25% of industry conversation included a reference to customer service or products. While product features, such as competitive interest rates on loans, drove significant sign-up interest from consumers, many customers complained about the service provided on the products. Furthermore, frequent periods of digital downtime meant that consumers could not access their accounts or manage their banking products, undermining the customer experience.

Major topics analysis

Volume		Net Sentiment
25.7%	Customer service	-82.1%
25.6%	Products	-37.4%
20.1%	Reputation	17.8%
17.3%	Account admin	-86.8%
16.0%	Digital experience	-81.1%
8.2%	Transactions	-86.4%
6.1%	Physical facilities	-72.7%
3.3%	Pricing or fees	-1.5%

Customer service had the highest volume of all conversations. This topic's low Net Sentiment of -82.1% indicated this as an area of potential improvement for all banks. The primary source of consumer dissatisfaction was long turnaround times for resolving issues and requests.

Products held the second-largest volume of conversation, and registered a Net Sentiment of -37.4%. Debit cards and other similar products were the main drivers of negative feedback. Common complaints included transactional issues, unauthorized charges, and delays in issuing or renewing cards. Concerns over data security and unresponsive customer service were also recurring themes.

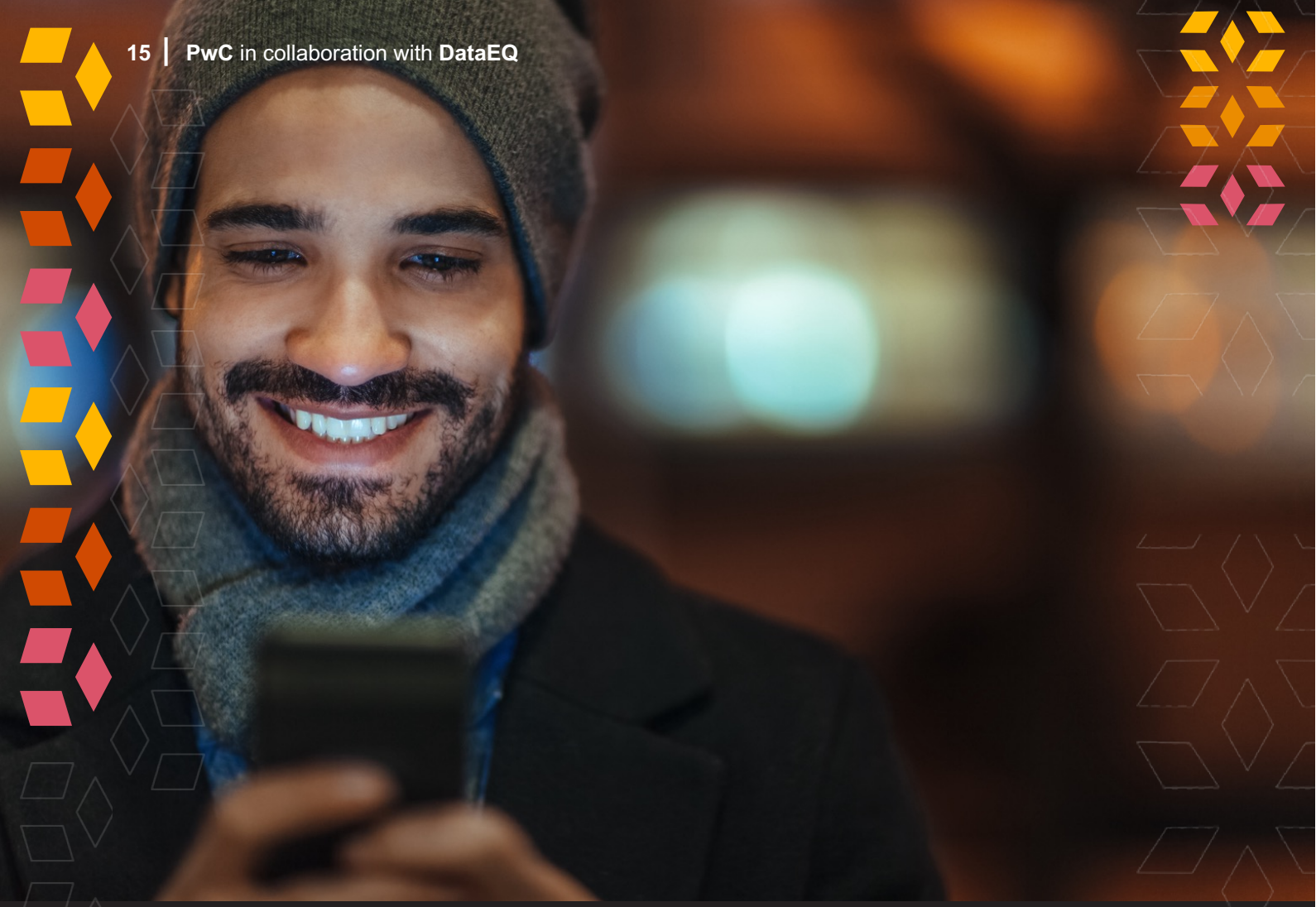
Reputation accounted for the third-largest share of conversation volume and stood out as the only topic to register a positive Net Sentiment. Charity and community empowerment programs garnered the most attention within this category, with consumers actively engaging in various initiatives aimed at community service, education, and environmental sustainability. Many social media authors also expressed gratitude for the banks' efforts to promote fraud awareness and customer vigilance.

Within the topic of Reputation, brand comparisons generated the largest volume of conversation. Despite a Net Sentiment of -6.7%, this subtopic had a beneficial impact on several banks with positive conversations mainly centered on consumers searching for and comparing the best financing rates and promotions among different banks. These types of brand comparisons act as influential mentions, swaying consumer choice by comparing products and service levels. These unaffiliated reviews and opinions are a powerful driver of reputation, influencing the choices and perceptions of potential customers. Negativity for this subtopic stemmed from consumers actively seeking to leave banks due to poor customer service and operational issues, often asking rival banks to buy out their loans to avoid further interactions with their current banks.

Digital experience ranked among the most negatively perceived topics, generally attributed to system outages and app downtime. Such technical setbacks left consumers unable to complete essential transactions, causing frustrations that contributed to a negative Net Sentiment of -81.1% for this topic.

Negative mentions made up the majority of conversation towards physical facilities, often citing poor branch experiences that were characterized by long waiting times and ineffective communication with staff. However, there were some positive mentions that celebrated the professionalism and efficiency of specific employees at certain branches, showing that human contact and connection is still valued by customers.

Pricing and fees had the smallest volume of conversations and recorded a lower negative Net Sentiment compared to other topics. Consumers expressed dissatisfaction with fees and interest rates charged by some banks. Other issues involved misleading product descriptions on companies' websites and allegations of fraudulent activity.



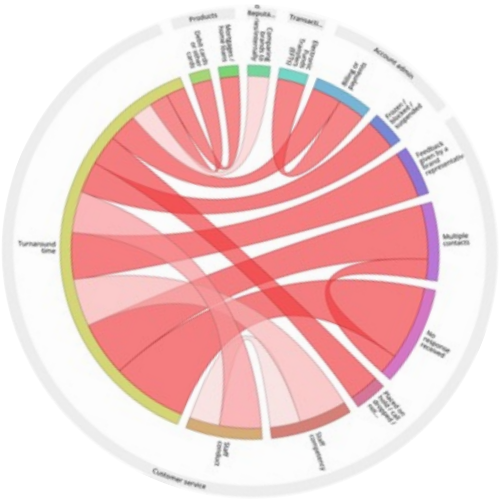
02

Customer service

Long wait times and billing or payments drive frustration across the industry

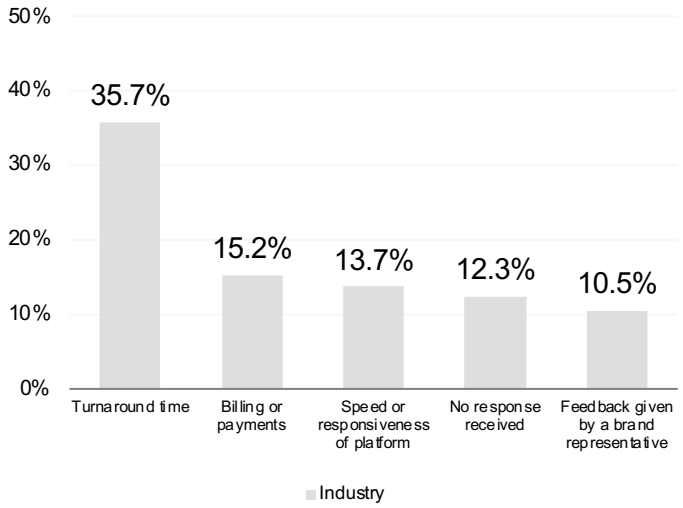
Turnaround time was the most prominent customer service complaint, co-occurring with every other topic. Consumers often faced prolonged wait times when reaching out to customer service via helplines or in-branch visits. This delay extended to resolving a multitude of issues, ranging from transaction failures and card setup difficulties to loan processing bottlenecks. In some instances, customers had to make multiple attempts to contact customer support, with their grievances still going unresolved. Coupled with this were complaints about the speed of responsiveness of platform performance, where issues such as slow money transfers and malfunctioning apps compounded customer frustrations. In some cases, the turnaround time was so long that some consumers indicated they would consider escalating their complaints to regulatory bodies like the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA).

Co-occurrences of negative customer service topics



Customer service complaints

Percentage volume by negative topic as it relates to Service feedback

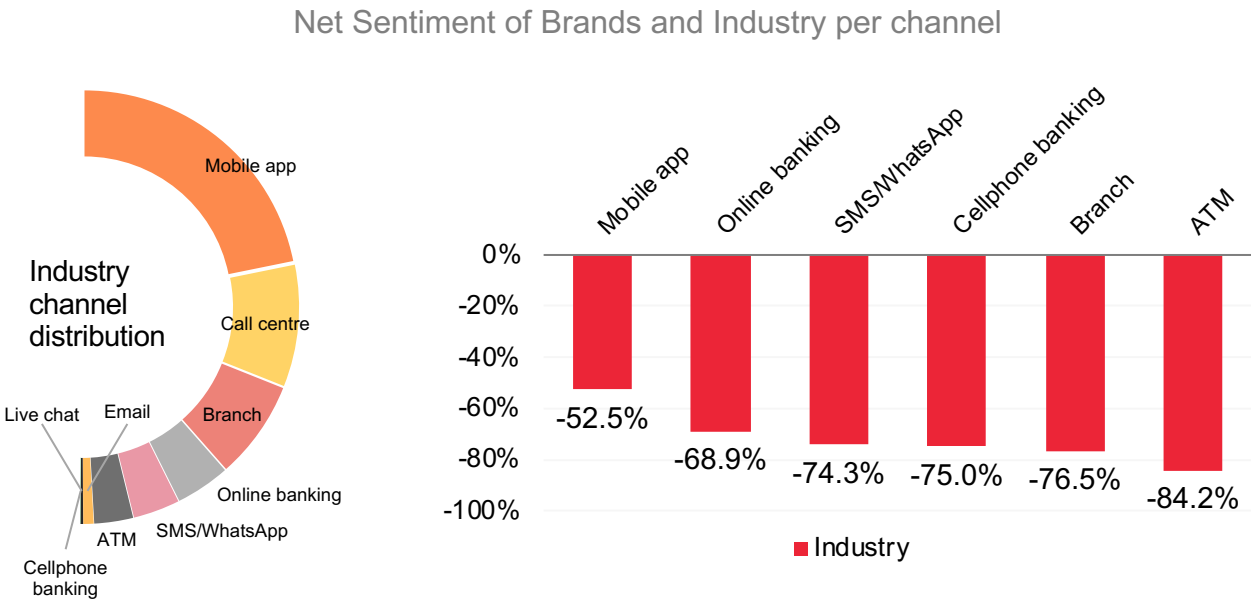


Billing and payment issues generated the second-most negative sentiment. Customers reported challenges in fund transfers, unexplained account freezes, and difficulties in securing additional payments for self-construction loans. Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT) became a focal point for consumer dissatisfaction, with issues transferring money between accounts and delays in receiving funds.

No response received was also a prominent negative theme co-occurring with turnaround time. Customers voiced their discontent at unresponsive bank representatives, despite repeated attempts to reach them through various communication channels. The perceived lack of support led some customers to author mentions dissuading others against signing up with the bank in question, contributing further to the cycle of negative sentiment.

Comparing Net Sentiment across communication channels

To address the industry-wide issues of slow turnaround time and inadequate customer service responsiveness, examining both the Net Sentiment and conversation volume across various communication channels is important to pinpoint where most problems arise.



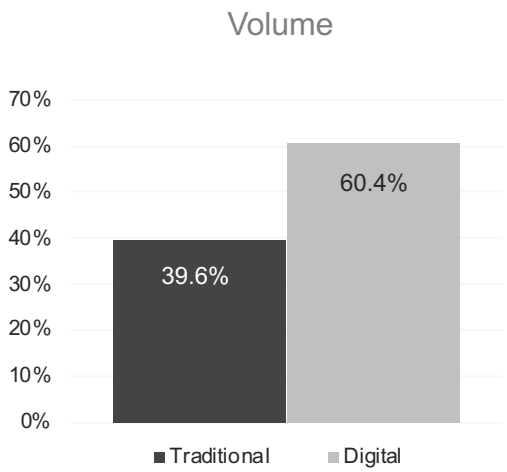
Mobile app held the highest share of conversations and the least negative Net Sentiment. Users generally praised banks' mobile apps for their user-friendliness, convenience, and efficient transaction capabilities. Negative mentions mostly involved technical issues such as login failures and transfer difficulties. Additional complaints included complicated navigation and poor user experience. There were instances where app updates led to operational difficulties, and some users noted that their in-app messages to customer support went unanswered. Due to these setbacks, certain customers stated they will be switching to other banking options.

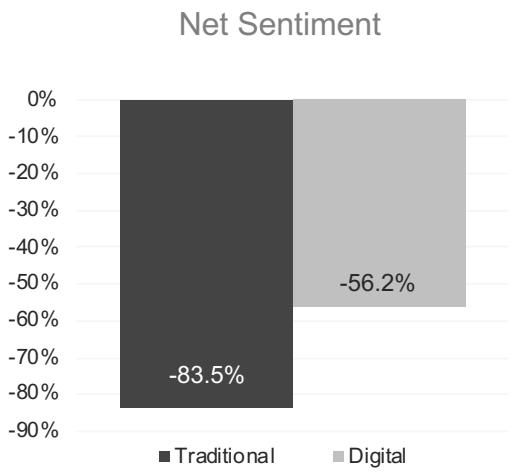
Call centers accounted for the second-largest share of industry conversations and had the lowest Net Sentiment at -90.9%. The bulk of the negative sentiment stemmed from long wait times and unsatisfactory customer service. Users found it challenging to reach customer service by phone and some reported waiting for extended periods to resolve their issues. Concerns were also raised about inadequate privacy measures when handling sensitive information, especially from users who had experienced fraudulent activities. Positive feedback was rare, but when given, highlighted the efficiency and helpfulness of specific call center representatives.

Bank branches ranked third in conversation volume within the industry. Negative comments primarily pointed out long waiting times, unhelpful staff, and unresolved issues despite multiple visits and complaints. Customers also noted incidents such as malfunctioning self-service machines. On the positive side, customers lauded branches for their adding ATMs in strategic locations and quality of amenities in waiting areas. Compliments were also given to professional and courteous staff who provided exceptional service.

Digital vs traditional communication channels

In terms of Net Sentiment, digital channels were perceived as more efficient in resolving issues, however, both traditional and digital channels faced their own sets of challenges that saw both channels record negative sentiment scores under -55%.





Net Sentiment by bank

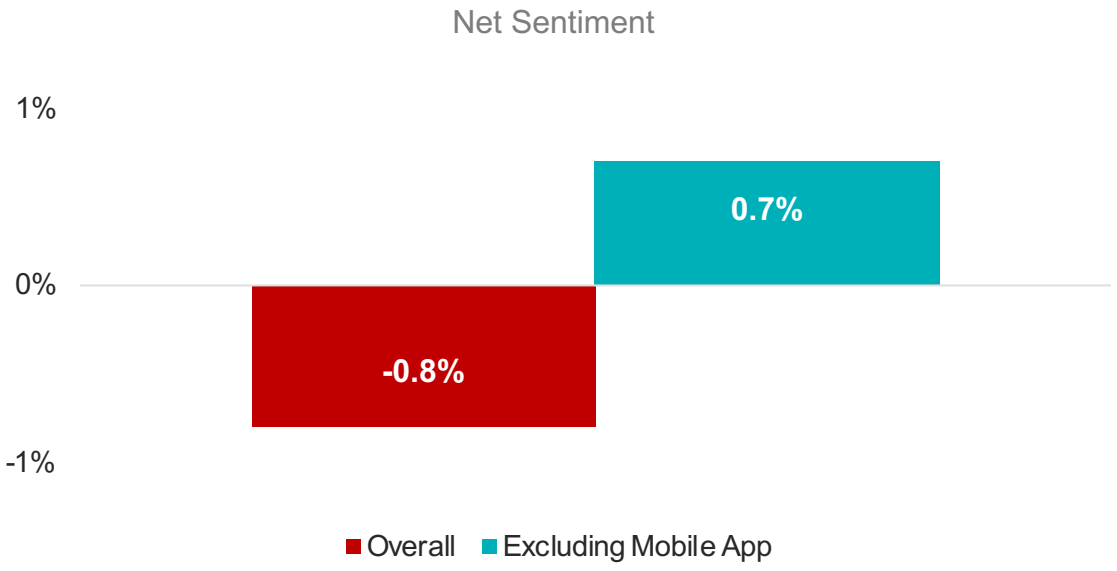
	Traditional	Digital
Bank 1	-68.1%	-70.2%
Bank 2	-86.3%	-44.3%
Bank 3	-73.4%	-11.8%
Bank 4	-89.2%	-80.9%
Bank 5	-71.2%	-64.2%
Bank 6	-84.2%	-76.8%
Bank 7	-87.9%	-80.7%

Digital channels including mobile apps, online banking, SMS/WhatsApp, and live chat attracted more conversation volumes compared to traditional channels. Net Sentiment for this channel was mostly negative with customers voicing concerns over recurring downtime in mobile apps and online banking platforms. Consumers expect 24/7 access to digital platforms. When these platforms are not operational, trust erodes and frustrations rise as evidenced in the fact that nearly two thirds of risk conversation for KSA banking included a reference to downtime, with many including threats of cancellation. There were also complaints about the difficulty of creating new accounts and updating profiles, as well as during online transactions. Instances of fraudulent activity further marred the digital experience. However, there was one bank that recorded -11.8%, a significantly better result than their competitors' digital channel Net Sentiment. This relative positivity was due to the bank collecting the highest share of positive feedback from digital channels and from authors praising the convenience, user-friendliness and cashback rewards of the bank's app.

Traditional channels such as branches, call centers, emails, and ATMs received fewer mentions, though were still significant in volume. Social media conversation shows that customers relied on these traditional channels to resolve their issues but often ended up dissatisfied. Common complaints included long wait times on helpline numbers and difficulties in contacting customer service via call centers. Technical problems with ATMs and self-service machines also made frequent appearances in customer feedback.

Stability and ease-of-use were key drivers for mobile app praise

Mobile app made up 11.1% of total conversations and had a Net Sentiment of -52.6%, the least negative among all channels. Excluding these conversations would raise the industry's overall Net Sentiment to 0.7%, highlighting the importance of optimizing digital platforms for better customer sentiment.

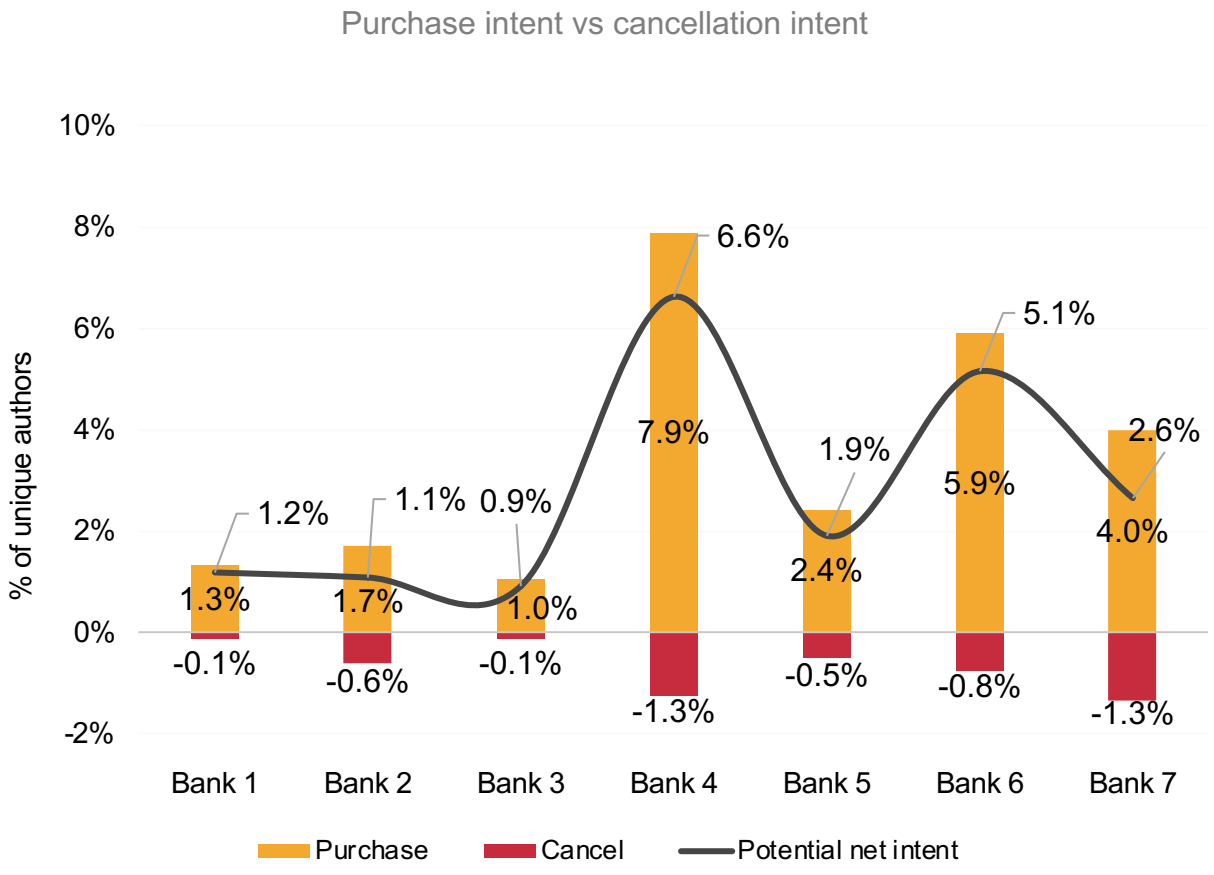


Speed and responsiveness of platforms were the main sources of customer complaints. Customers reported sluggish, unresponsive, or non-functional apps, as well as difficulties in account access, fund transfers, and personal information updates. Platform navigation issues, including login difficulties and failed transactions, were also common complaints.

One bank managed to attract noteworthy positive feedback for its mobile app thanks to its innovative payment reversal and refund features. Their mobile payment app was also praised for cashback rewards on bill payments, competitive exchange rates for international transfers, and ease of mobile payments.

Acquisition opportunities outweigh cancellation threats

Termed 'potential net intent,' this metric reflects the difference between the percentages of authors discussing either purchasing or canceling services. None of the banks registered a negative potential net intent score, indicating that many customers are seeking access to better banking services and their associated benefits. Two banks even recorded purchase intent discussions at rates higher than 5.8%.



Net Intent = Authors showing purchase intent % - Authors showing cancellation intent %

03

Product and Pricing

How Saudi banking products are resonating with consumers

Products and service issues drew similar conversation volume within the major topics discussed above, but products had a less negative Net Sentiment of -37.4% compared to other major topics that scored below -80%. This highlights the influential role of product offerings in shaping industry perceptions and suggests an opportunity for banks to improve customer experience and the industry's overall sentiment.

Product volume and Net Sentiment

	Volume	Net Sentiment
Debit cards or other cards	24.0%	-45.3%
Loans (”credit solutions”)	21.5%	2.0%
Mortgage/home loans	20.3%	-56.1%
Credit cards	8.4%	-13.2%
Investment products	5.2%	-24.1%
Reward/loyalty programs	4.4%	-14.4%
Business banking	1.9%	7.9%
Insurance products	0.5%	-66.3%

All products registered a negative Net Sentiment, with two exceptions: business banking and loans, which also comprised the subtopic credit solutions. Although holding just 1.9% of the total conversation, business banking garnered a positive Net Sentiment of 7.9%. Customers enquired about opening business accounts, applying for loans, and utilizing services tailored for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They also showed interest in digital functionalities, such as online account access and mobile apps. Negative conversation revolved around difficulties in opening business accounts both online and in-person, slow verification and activation processes, unresponsive customer service, and issues with updating account information and transferring funds to other businesses.

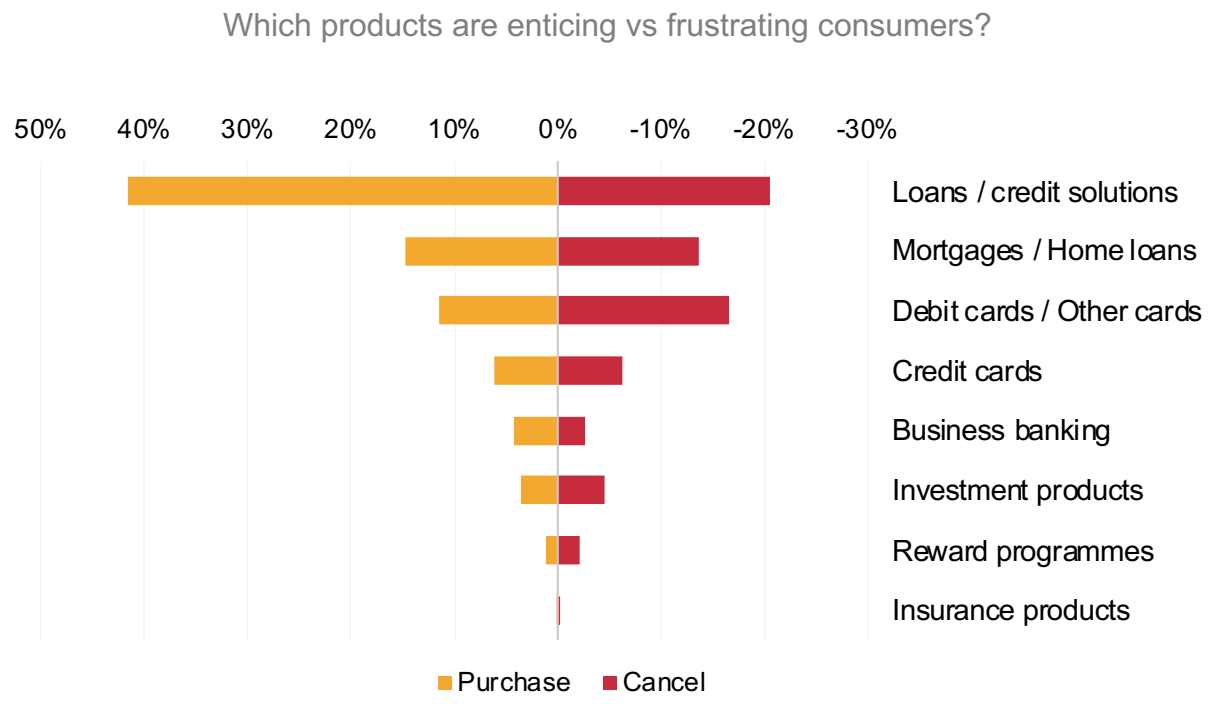
Debit cards or other cards had a Net Sentiment of -45.3%. This subtopic commanded the largest volume of mentions with 24% of product conversation. The common complaints included card failures during transactions, difficulties in renewing or replacing lost or stolen cards, and unauthorized activities on accounts.

Loans and credit solutions was the second-most spoken about product, making up 21.5% of conversation and registering the only other positive Net Sentiment at 2%. This conversation included a mix of positive and negative feedback covering various topics related to personal finance. Positive conversation was generated by consumers seeking information on eligibility, different loan types, and interest rates. Many also inquired about transferring their debt to banks with more favorable terms. Within negative conversation, some customers pointed out issues related to the loan approval processes, disbursement delays, and insufficient communication from customer service.

Mortgages (also known as home loans) held the third highest share of conversation and registered Net Sentiments of -56.1%. Consumers voiced frustration over delayed or denied housing loans, inability to transfer subsidized housing loans, delays in the disbursement of funds, lack of communication from the bank and alleged ambiguity around their processes. Others accused certain banks of withholding additional payment options such as self-building financing and other government-supported subsidies meant to support home buyers.

Difficulties in canceling cards and transferring loans drives customer churn

Analyzing purchase and cancel conversations offers valuable insights into what products are enticing or frustrating customers within the Saudi banking industry. A prime example of this is loans, also known as credit solutions, which dominated both purchase and cancel conversations. This product had the highest purchase conversation by far, with most inquiries centered around loan types, showing general positive sentiment despite some complaints about response time. Cancel conversations revealed customer frustrations with services, interest rates, and support, leading many to explore the possibility of transferring loans to banks offering better conditions.



Purchase conversation towards mortgages or home loans largely revolved around loan transfers and customers persuing lower interest rates. Cancel conversations were less positive, noting difficulties in loan transfers, repayment issues, and property evaluation fee concerns that prompted some customers to claim they would be switching banks.

[redacted] Peace be upon you, I have a visa card that I requested to cancel a week ago, and the bank is delaying the cancellation, and I have a mortgage loan pending on it now!!!

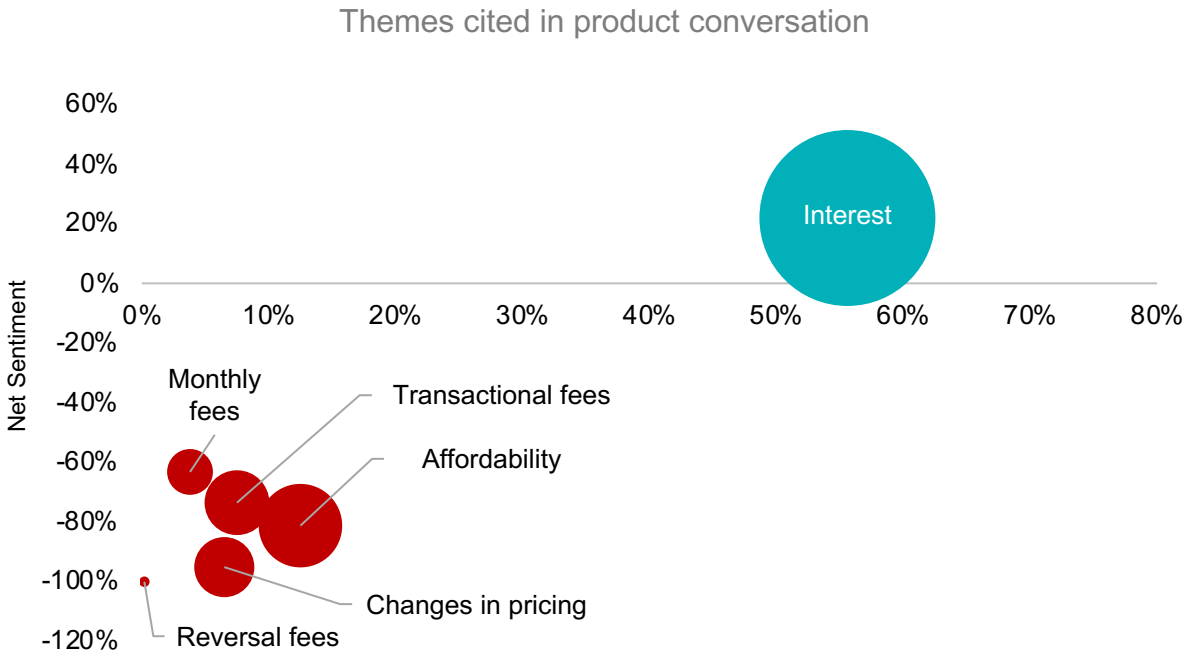
[redacted] My salary is deposited in [redacted] bank, and I would like to transfer from [redacted] to your bank. Will you issue financing for me as quickly as possible, especially since the application I have is addressed to [redacted], because unfortunately it's been 3 days since I submitted a request to [redacted] and no one responds, every time they say it is in progress [redacted]

With regards to debit and credit cards, prospective customers sought information on application procedures, requirements, and promotions. Cancel conversations revealed a less favorable view with issues ranging from card malfunctions and blocked accounts to difficulties with online banking services. These concerns not only led to cancelation requests but also highlighted delays in the cancelation process itself.

In business banking, most purchase-related conversations centered on inquiries for business loans and whether accounts could be opened online. Cancel conversations showed that delays or cancellations of incoming transfers created high levels of stress and dissatisfaction, prompting authors to consider switching both personal and commercial accounts to competitors offering better services.

Home loan interest rates drive positivity. Affordability and pricing changes met with complaints.

Pricing and fees may have accounted for the smallest share of conversations among major topics, yet it registered the least negative Net Sentiment, meriting closer examination. Conversations about interest or return on investment (ROI) dominated this topic and were generally positive.



Size of bubble indicates the absolute volume of conversation.
First figure indicates share of voice, second figure indicates Net Sentiment

These mentions primarily involved inquiries into home loan interest rates, along with personal loans, property financing, and debt purchase. Consumers commonly inquired about home and personal loan rates, as well as property financing and debt purchase. They actively compared rates, offers, and payment options across banks. Special promotions, such as zero-interest installment plans at select electronics stores, garnered praise for some banks. Negative mentions often revolved around high interest rates, poor customer service, and unresolved issues. Some customers incurred late fees due to bank errors, while others expressed frustration over unclear information on loan approvals, repayments, fees, and interest rates.

Affordability collected the second highest share of volume, with a largely negative Net Sentiment. Customers voiced their displeasure on social media concerning high banking fees, interest rates, and additional charges. Criticisms targeted the banks for their lack of transparent practices, particularly after consumers felt misled by the bank's offers and policies.

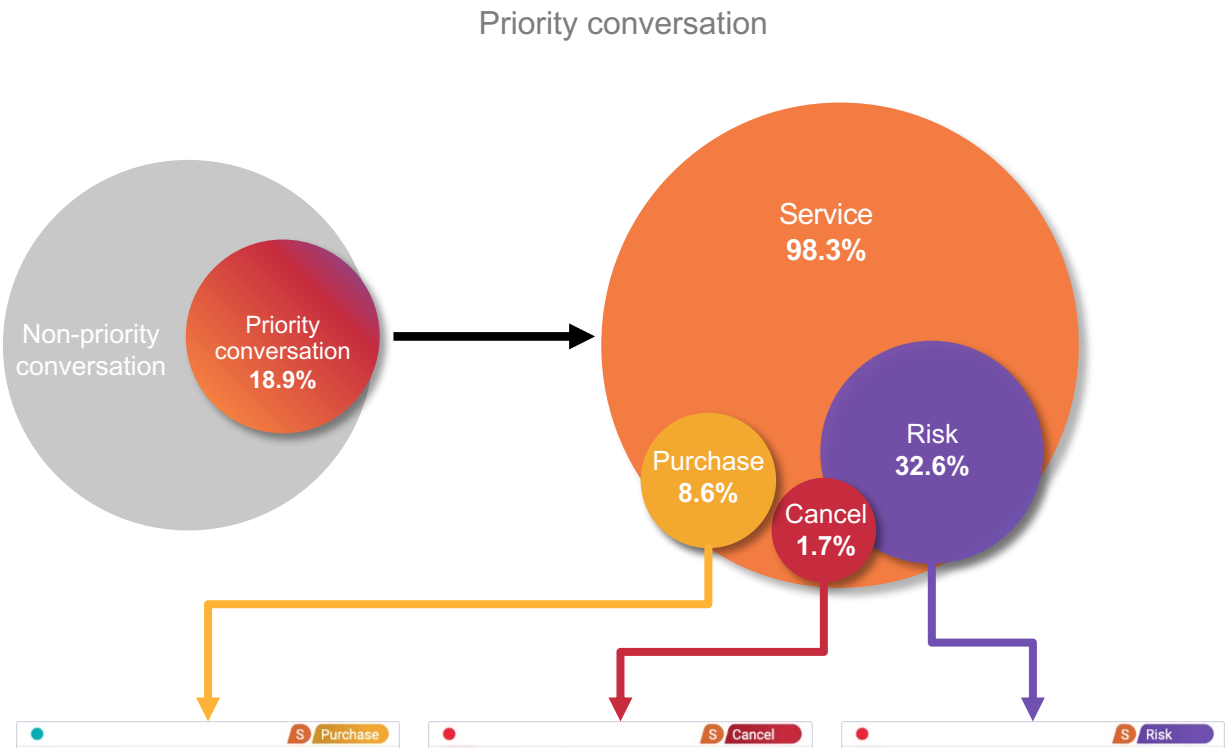
I have a question. I have a personal and real estate financing loan at and I want a bank to buy the debt. Which banks have offers and the lowest percentage?

I talked to them and told them that the average cost changed!! I incurred huge losses. They say do you remember how much the average price was before?!! By God is this a bank? Can anyone help me, how do I file a lawsuit against them? Enough is enough and this is completely unacceptable.

04

Social Customer Service

One in five mentions warrant banks' attention



[redacted] Peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you. I need a personal loan. How much is the current rate?

[redacted] The biggest mistake of my life is going to [redacted], but God willing, I will leave it soon. The worst bank in the world, I advise against dealing with it because it procrastinates with customers, even the employees don't know anything, and don't take care of customers.

Brothers in [redacted], how did the client's information leak!!!! Yesterday I received a message from the bank that my card needs renewal, and today a number calls me, knows my name and knows that my card is expiring and claims to be an employee of yours and asks me for a code and for the secret message in English which is a request for direct entry. I knew, but someone else may not know [redacted]

Among other high-priority conversations, the mentions that pose a potential brand risk are identified by DataEQ and referred to as "actionable mentions" or "RPCS conversations". These are the mentions that matter. The ones that banks should direct their attention to for timely responses. DataEQ defines actionable RPCS conversations as:

Risk
Mentions that pose an operational or reputational risk for the brand.

Purchase
Mentions from prospective customers who want to purchase products or services.

Cancel
Mentions from customers looking to cancel their service or not purchase from the brand again.

Service
Mentions from customers who require assistance or describe an experience with the brand.

RPCS conversation constituted 18.9% of overall verified mentions. Registering 98.3%, almost all RPCS mentions related to service. Risk held 32.6% of volume. Cancel tags made up just 1.7% of the volume, while purchase tags were more substantial at 8.6%. A single mention could carry multiple RPCS tags, allowing for a total volume that may exceed 100%.

A third of priority conversation went unanswered

Nearly 20% of consumer conversation required a response from the banks. This equates to almost 1 million mentions. The industry average response rate stood at 62.5%, signaling that a majority of priority tweets did receive attention. In contrast, the United Arab Emirates logged an industry average of 72% for 2022, suggesting that there is room to improve the response to queries for the Saudi banking industry.

62.5%
Industry response rate

1.9hrs
24-hour industry response time

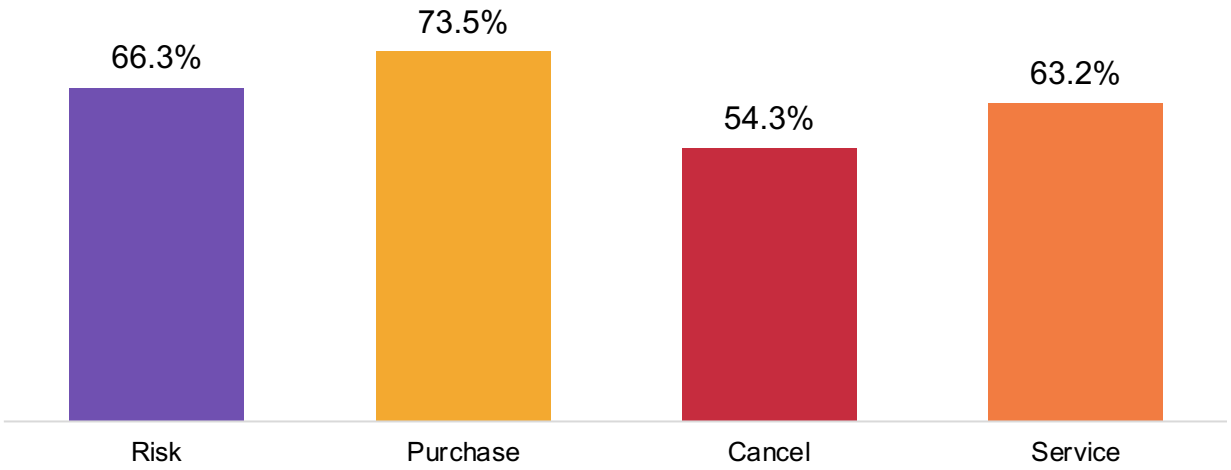
0.5hrs
08.00-17.00 working hours industry response time

Consumers increasingly expect "always-on" service from digital channels, making it crucial to measure response times on two different scales. The first metric gauges round-the-clock responsiveness, while the second focuses on standard business hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Across the industry, the average 24-hour response time was a respectable 1.9 hours, while the average response during working hours was an impressive 30 minutes.

Purchase opportunities have the highest speed and likelihood of response

Purchase opportunities drew the highest response rates from banks and also saw the shortest average response times. This pattern indicates that the Saudi banking industry is prioritizing acquiring new customers over servicing current ones.

Industry response rate per priority category



24-hour industry response time (hours)

	Risk	Purchase	Cancel	Service
Industry	**1.8**	**1.1**	**2.8**	**1.9**

08:00 -17:00 working hours industry response time (hours)

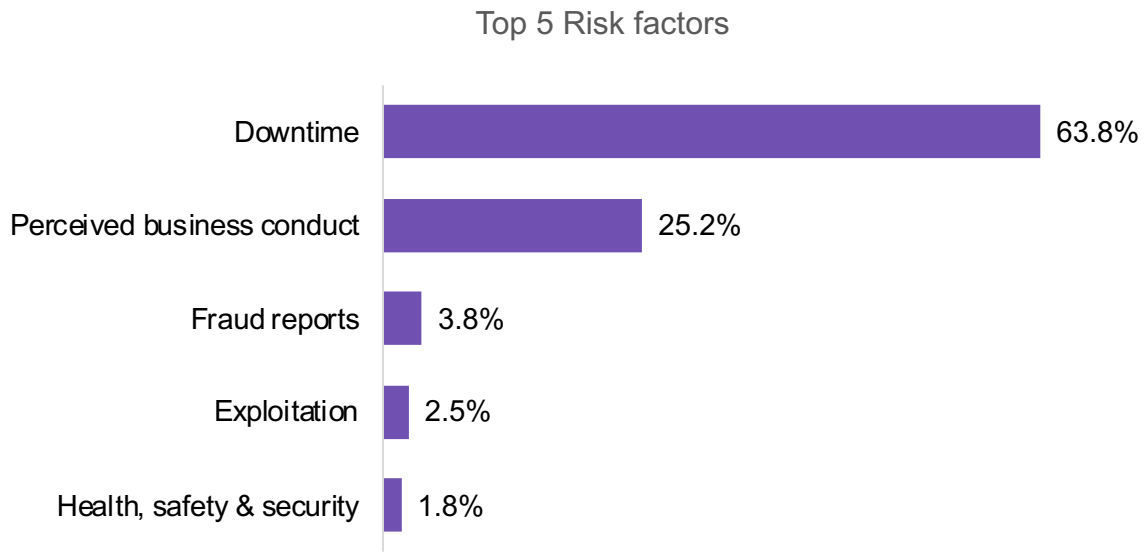
	Risk	Purchase	Cancel	Service
Industry	**0.4**	**0.2**	**0.7**	**0.4**

05

Risk and Reputation

Downtime drove majority of risk-related conversation

The DataEQ Crowd further segmented the crucial topic of risk conversation into specific subtopics, providing a more detailed view of the factors driving the volume and sentiment of each one within the Saudi banking industry.



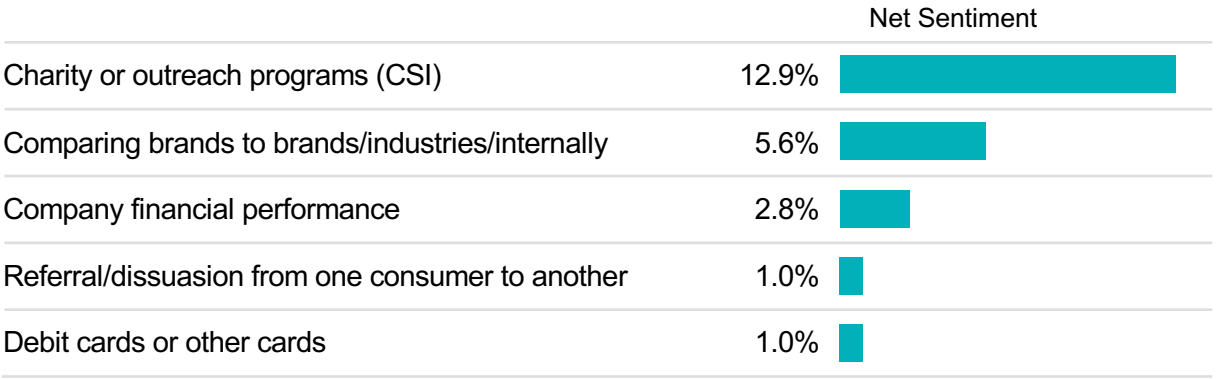
Downtime dominated the discussion on risk, accounting for 63.8% of the conversation volume. The chief concerns were issues such as inaccessibility to online banking platforms, glitches in mobile apps, and faulty ATMs. These issues highlight significant opportunities for the Saudi banking industry to enhance system reliability and stability.

Perceived business conduct constituted 25.2% of the risk-related conversation. This subtopic held multiple instances of issues ranging from security breaches and alleged fraudulent transactions to the dissemination of misleading information. These mentions act as warning signs for severe operational issues that, if left unattended, could compound and threaten the reputation of the entire industry.

CSI initiatives elevate brand reputation

All subtopics in the reputational conversation showed a positive sentiment rating. Corporate Social Initiatives (CSI) contributed most significantly, registering a 12.9% Net Sentiment. Authors complimented the collaboration between public entities and private banks to achieve common goals related to social upliftment and environmental stewardship, especially during times of financial difficulty and in the month of Ramadan. Banks CSI efforts also extended to vocational training for the disabled and educational campaigns to combat fraud.

Topics driving positive reputational conversation



*Topic category

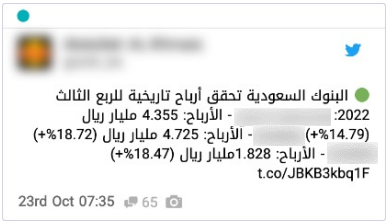
Charity or outreach programs (CSI)*

#With_it_we_see. A distinguished community initiative by [redacted] "handing over 20 white sticks to the beneficiaries of the Turning Point Association, in an atmosphere filled with joy and pleasure, and the distinguished presence of the blind and their families.

Comparing brands to brands / industries / internally*

The strongest card for [redacted] (The knights). Visa Infinite [redacted] from the [redacted]. 95 thousand welcome miles, that give you many internal and external trips. For example: 10 internal trips, 9 Gulf countries trips, 7 Cairo trips, 4 London trips, 2 America trips. Offer valid until 28 February #Advertisement

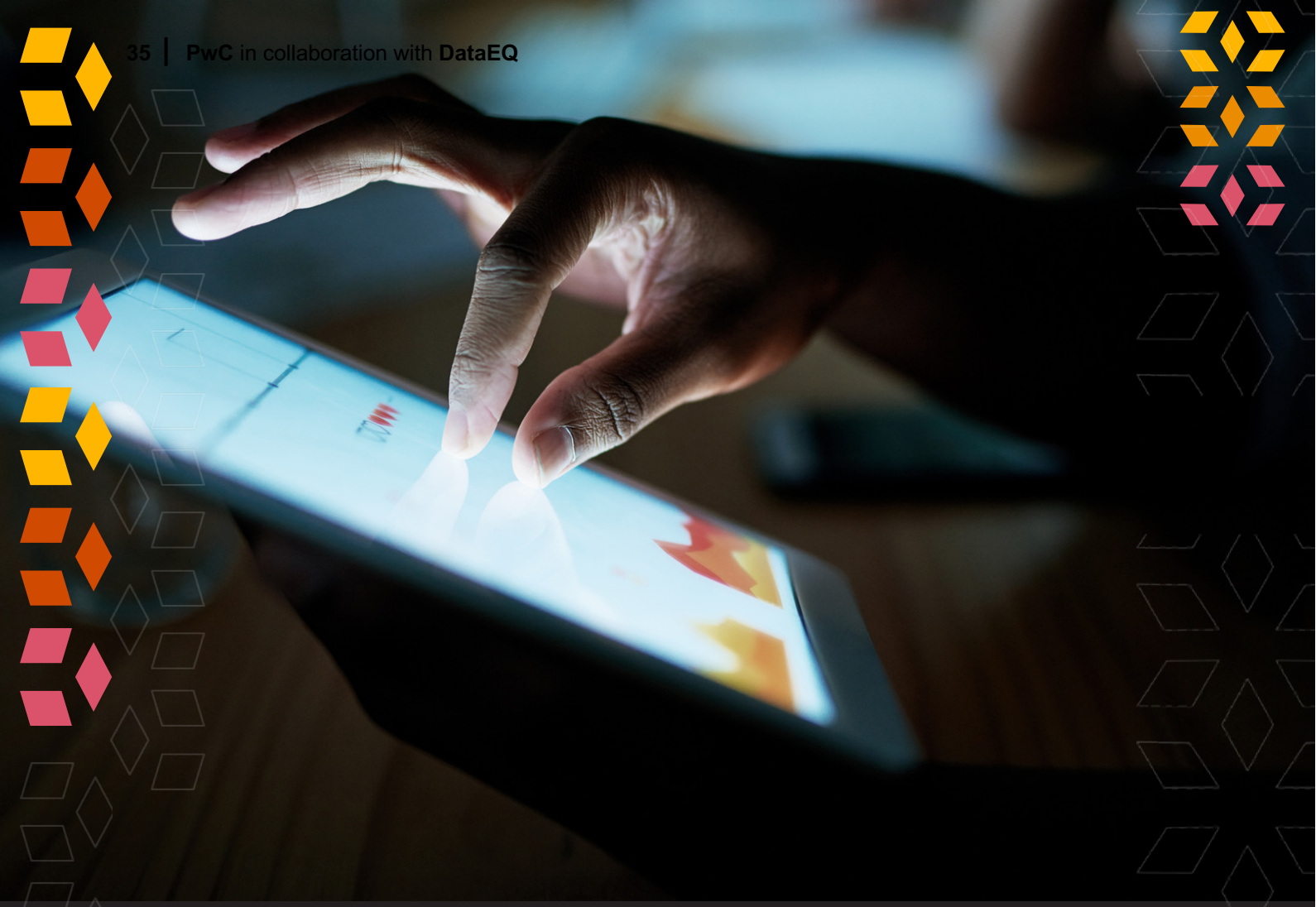
Referral / dissuasion from one consumer to another*



Saudi banks achieve historic profits for the third quarter of 2022: [redacted] - Profits: SAR 4.355 billion (14.79%+) [redacted] ([redacted] National Bank) - Profits: SAR 4.725 billion (18.72%+) [redacted] - Profits: SAR 1.828 billion (18.47%+)

Comparing brands to other brands or industries was the second largest driver of positive engagement, registering a 5.6% Net Sentiment. Customers evaluated Saudi banks against each other based on various parameters such as size of their customer base, marketing campaigns, technological progress, service offerings, as well as the level of customer care quality the authors experienced at both banks. These mentions proved to be a major reputational boost for the brand that was considered to be the winner of the comparison.

Financial performance held a Net Sentiment of 2.8%. The discussion primarily focused on favorable financial outcomes, including profit growth and dividend distribution to shareholders. Additionally, there were several positive mentions regarding news that Fitch Ratings raising the credit rating for eight banks, and their subsequent rising stock prices on the Saudi Stock Exchange.



06

Conclusion

The Way Forward

1

The banking industry almost reached positive Net Sentiment due to CSI initiatives, flourishing financial performances, and improved CX.

2

Despite CX improvements, **customer service and turnaround time remained prominent pain points.**

3

Digital channels dominated volumes and Net Sentiment. However, human interactions at branches still solicited praise and positivity.

4

Digital downtime impacted the industry and eroded customer confidence in banks.

5

Consumers remained price sensitive towards home loans and credit cards and have shown a greater interest in saving and investing.

6

Digital security remained a major concern amid account irregularities and reports of fraudulent transactions.

Conclusion by PwC

Points:

- The banking industry almost reached positive Net Sentiment due to CSI initiatives, flourishing financial performances, and improved CX.
- Despite CX improvements, customer service and turnaround time remained prominent pain points.
- Digital channels dominated volumes and Net Sentiment. However, human interactions at branches still solicited praise and positivity.
- Digital downtime impacted the industry and eroded customer confidence in banks.
- Consumers remained price sensitive towards home loans and credit cards and have shown a greater interest in saving and investing.
- Digital security remained a major concern amid account irregularities and reports of fraudulent transactions.

07

Methodology

Data collection

DataEQ retrieved 4 988 742 public tweets mentioning Bank Albilad, Al Rajhi Bank, Alinma Bank, Riyad Bank and Saudi National Bank from 1 May 2022 to 30 April 2023.

	Population	*Sample*	*Margin of error*
Al Bilad Bank	564 059	62 369	0.3%
Al Rajhi Bank	2 076 081	47 869	0.4%
Alinma Bank	1 446 895	83 308	0.2%
Banque Saudi Fransi	31 379	18 095	0.5%
Riyad Bank	490 335	34 600	0.5%
Saudi Awwal bank	58 290	24 541	0.5%
Saudi National Bank	321 696	23 200	0.6%
Industry	4 988 735	293 982	0.2%

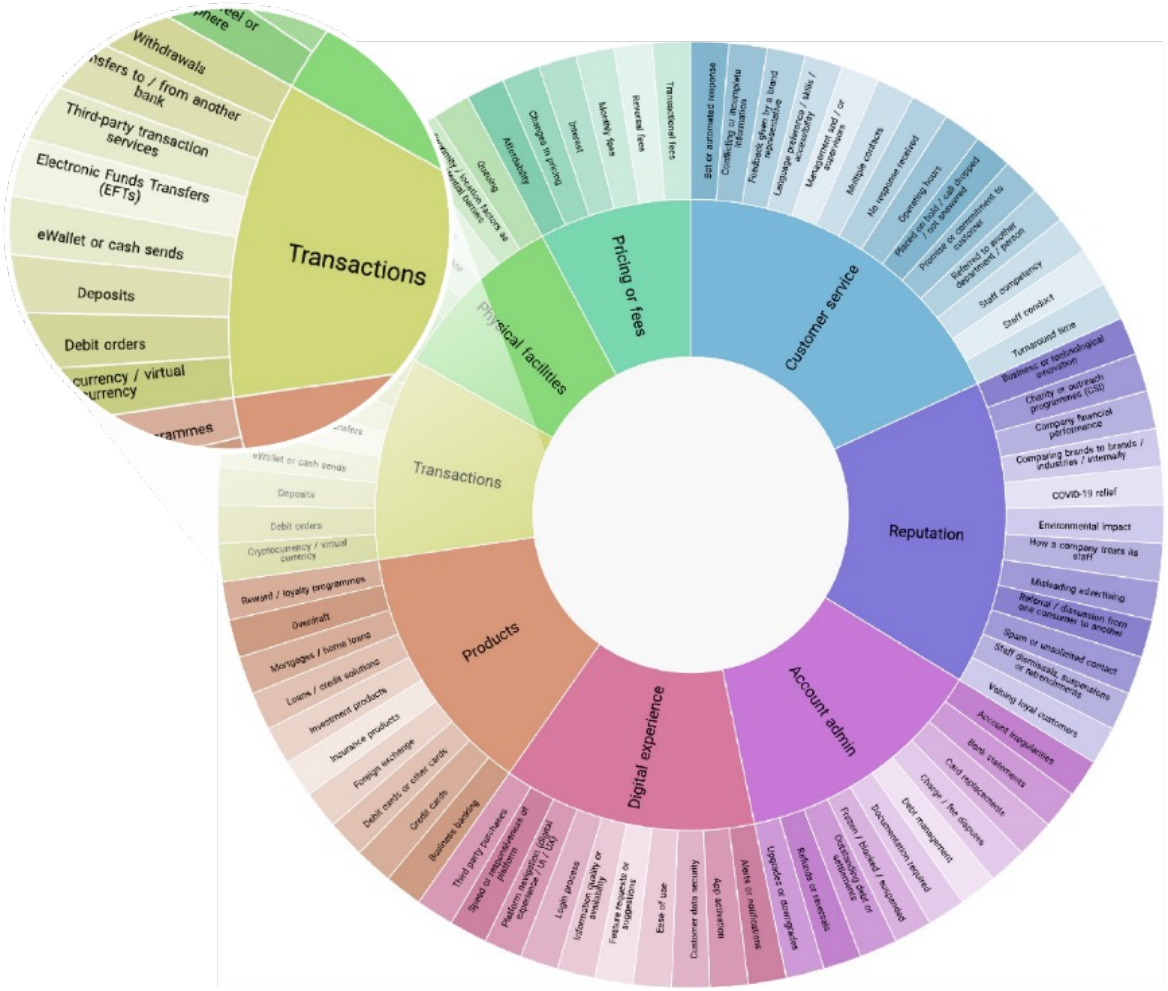
Sentiment methodology

To carry out sentiment analysis with a 95% confidence level and an overall 0.2% margin of error, a random sample (293 983) of these mentions were processed through DataEQ's proprietary Crowd of vetted and trained local language speakers. Each post was coded and verified by multiple Crowd members who assessed the sentiment in the post (positive, negative or neutral).

Topic methodology

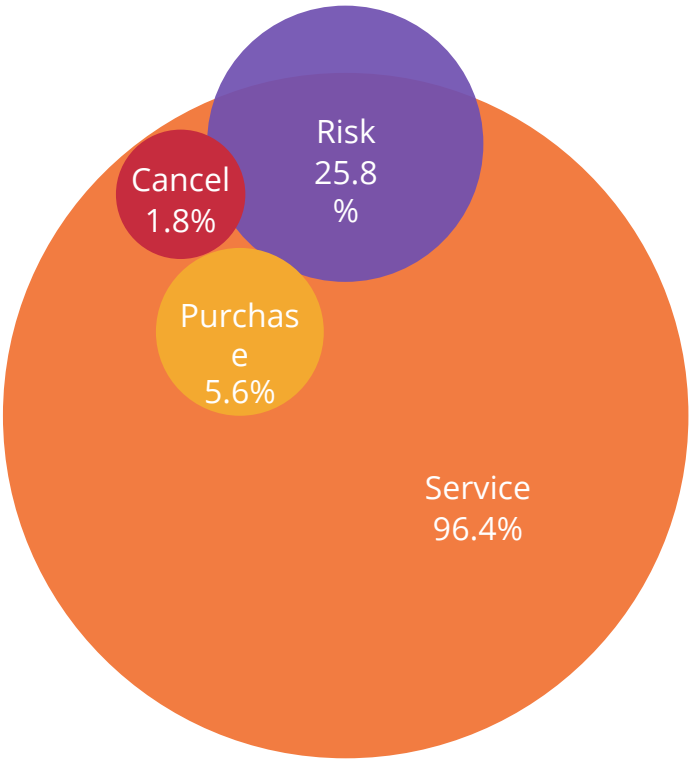
Topic analysis enables a granular understanding of the specific themes driving consumer sentiment. A sample of 62 325 sentiment-bearing (i.e. positive and negative only) mentions was sent to the Crowd for topic assignment.

Topic wheel



Eight major topic themes encompass the 88 subtopics. The broader themes are customer service, reputation, account admin, digital experience, product, transactions, physical facilities and pricing or fees. Mentions can be assigned more than one topic, allowing for a more detailed analysis of issues influencing consumer sentiment. This means that totals on topic ranking graphs can be larger than 100%.

Priority conversation distribution



Risk

- Discrimination
- Downtime
- Protests or boycotts
- Health, safety and security
- Accusations of unethical behavior
- Threatening legal or regulatory action
- Fraud reports
- Exploitation
- Anti-competitive behavior
- Escalation to supervisor

Purchase

- Author is expressing interest in signing up with the bank

Cancel

- Author is threatening to cancel, or is in the process of cancelling

Service

- Request for assistance
- Customer feedback

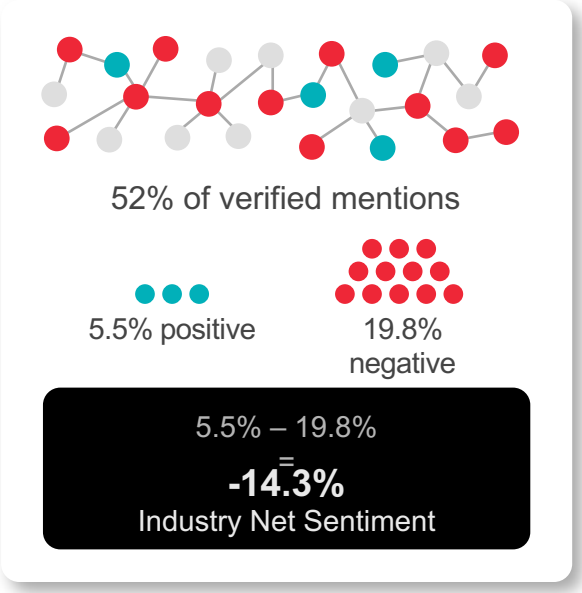
What is Net Sentiment?

Net sentiment is calculated by subtracting positive volume from negative volume, to produce a net value.

The results are an aggregate across all brands assessed in this report.

Operational vs. reputational sentiment

The overall Net Sentiment score comprises two categories of conversations, operational and reputational. The volume of each category impacts the overall Net Sentiment score. Depending on volume, one category will invariably impact the overall Net Sentiment score more than the other.



Operational sentiment:

Sentiment of authors who are in a customer journey with the brand. Includes six stages: not a customer, pre-customer, new customer, current customer, churning customer, and post-customer.

Reputational sentiment:

Sentiment of consumer or press conversation that does not directly relate to being in a customer journey with a brand. This includes sponsorship, campaign, journalistic and other reputational content.

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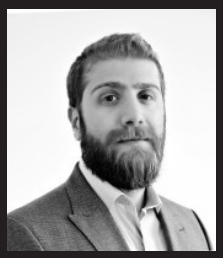

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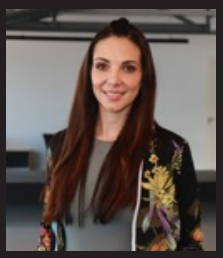

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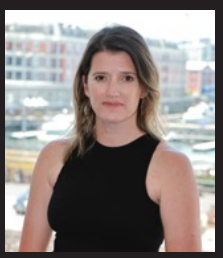

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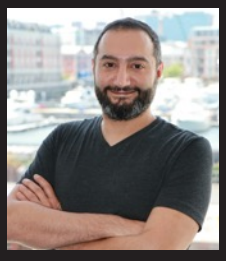

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