

The Forrester New Wave™: AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms, Q3 2021

The Nine Providers That Matter Most And How They Stack Up

by Cinny Little

July 19, 2021

Why Read This Report

In Forrester's evaluation of the emerging market for AI-enabled consumer intelligence (AICI) platforms, we identified the nine most significant providers in the category — Brandwatch, Digimind, Khoros, Linkfluence, NetBase Quid, Resonate, Sprinklr, Synthesio, and Talkwalker — and evaluated them. This report details our findings about how well each vendor scored against 10 criteria and where they stand in relation to each other. Customer insights professionals can use this report to select the right partner for their AI-enabled consumer intelligence needs.

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by [Cinny Little](#)
with [Srividya Sridharan](#) and [Robert Perdoni](#)
July 19, 2021

AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Activates Insights Across Silos

To remain competitive, firms must continuously grow their ability to take actions that matter at speed and at scale using consumer insights from quantitative and qualitative data, information, and knowledge from analysis. AICI platforms enable enterprises to use insights from data from outside their firm (e.g., social, web, and/or consumer data) and combine it with their own data (e.g., CRM, website) to optimize the experience of their current customers. But AICI platforms take that a leap further: They also enable looking beyond firms' current customers' behaviors, needs, and preferences, rapidly delivering actionable insights on emerging trends, outliers, and unexpected shifts or changes in consumer behavior. AICI platforms drive enterprisewide 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, and product development and management.

AICI Platforms Are Expanding To Deliver Predictive And Prescriptive Insights

Vendors evaluated in this assessment of AICI platforms are, each in their own way, continuing expansion from their roots in existing market categories such as PR/communications, social listening, social suites, customer engagement (including customer care), or market and competitive intelligence. Fueled by organic growth, venture capital, and/or acquisition, each vendor is on the journey to enable more decision-making by more people, including both business and operations decision-makers and insights professionals. The ultimate journey is in progress, as each platform's capabilities move beyond explanatory or diagnostic insights (what happened and why) and continue to expand AI-enabled capabilities that deliver predictive (what is likely to happen) and prescriptive insights (recommend or do it for me).

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Forrester Research, Inc., 60 Acorn Park Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140 USA
+1 617-613-6000 | Fax: +1 617-613-5000 | forrester.com

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AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms Evaluation Overview

The Forrester New Wave™ differs from our traditional Forrester Wave™. In the Forrester New Wave evaluation, we assess only emerging technologies, and we base our analysis on a 10-criterion survey and a 2-hour briefing with each evaluated vendor. We group the 10 criteria into current offering and strategy (see Figure 1). We also review market presence.

We included nine vendors in this assessment: Brandwatch, Digimind, Khoros, Linkfluence, NetBase Quid, Resonate, Sprinklr, Synthesio, and Talkwalker (see Figure 2 and see Figure 3). Each of these vendors has:

- **More than \$5 million in revenue from the AI-enabled consumer intelligence platform.** The vendor earned more than \$5 million in 2020 from subscription or license revenue, not including revenue from services related to the product (other than standard maintenance and support revenue included in a subscription or license).
- **Executed a clear go-to-market strategy for consumer intelligence use cases.** The vendor serves relevant use cases and companies' roles with actionable insights.
- **AI-enabled existing features and functions and a roadmap for continuous expansion.** The platform balances and enables functions including search, exploration of insights, and analytics and reporting for both insights experts and business or operations users.
- **Relevance to Forrester's client base.** We focused on vendors most relevant to Forrester clients, as indicated by frequency of client inquiries and because, in Forrester's judgment, their market presence, unique offering, and technical capabilities warranted inclusion.

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FIGURE 1 Assessment Criteria: AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms, Q3 2021

Criteria	Platform evaluation details
Data sources	What mainstream social network data does the platform access out of the box (OOTB)? What other social data does it access? How does the platform add new social data sources? What other digital data streams are accessed? What data sourced from consumer panel data providers does the platform access OOTB?
Data onboarding and segmentation	What owned data and customers' internal operational data can the platform access? What are the integration options? How does the platform use AI to execute segmentation OOTB? How much training does the AI require to self-sufficiently segment data?
Domains and languages	How does the platform support domains? How is this implemented? What languages are supported, and how? How does the platform use AI/machine learning (ML) to identify and analyze topics, themes, and trends across all text data? How does it identify and analyze sentiment and emotion?
Search and insights discovery	What is the user experience for a new search? Are there multiple places in the platform where users initiate search? How well does the platform track searches across all data? Are there limitations to monitoring search? From initiation to results shown, how does the platform use AI/ML to facilitate insights?
Analytics and reporting	What analytics and data visualization capabilities are available within the platform? How is analytics shared within the platform? What options are there for exporting analytics (e.g., to Tableau, Domo, etc.)? How is AI/ML used to train the platform to surface insights most relevant to a user?
User experience and actionability	Is there one user interface across all data accessed by the platform? If multiple products are within, how seamlessly can customers navigate between them? What are the primary use cases for insights from the data? How is AI/ML applied to surface insights for decision-making? What in-platform collaboration is available?
Data regulation compliance	As relevant to geographic presence, how does the vendor ensure the platform's compliance with data privacy regulations (such as GDPR or CPRA) and certification programs (such as ISO 27001)? As relevant, how does it compliantly manage social data, panel provider data, and platform customer-owned data?

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FIGURE 1 Assessment Criteria: AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms, Q3 2021 (Cont.)

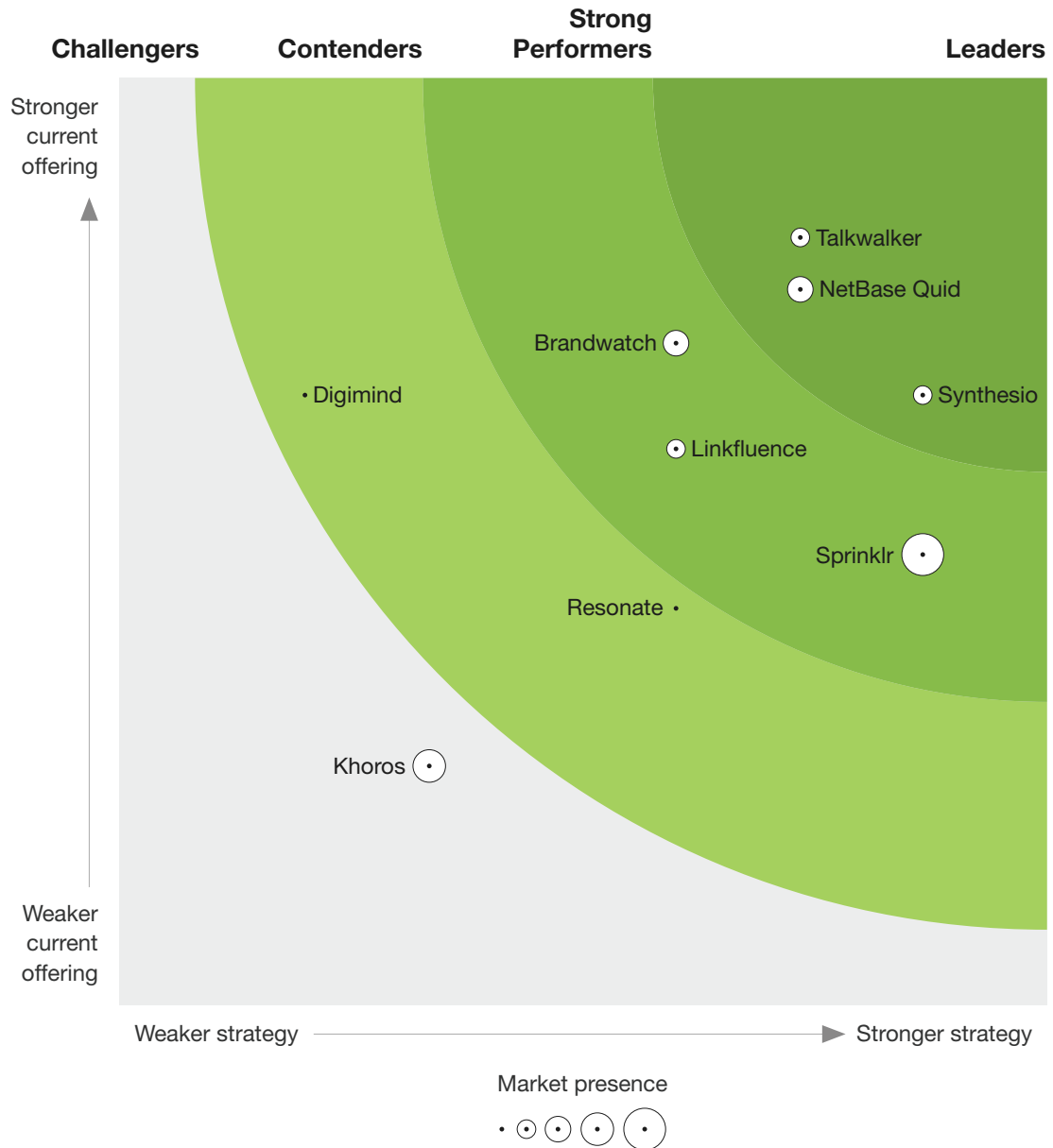
Criteria	Platform evaluation details
Product vision	How does the vendor's vision support customers in driving decision-making about business outcomes from insights provided by the platform? How does the vendor track and invest in state-of-the-art, AI-enabled consumer intelligence technology? How well does the vendor respond to competitive threats?
Product roadmap	How well does the vendor balance executing on customer expectations with agility in response to market change? What is its approach to product innovation? Does it show commitment to product innovation, including innovation history, R&D budget, M&A, and investment news? What partnerships are in place?
Market approach	What is the vendor's go-to-market approach? What platform-related services are offered? How is it priced? How transparent is the pricing model? What examples can the vendor provide of customer use for decision-making about product or experience innovation, audience strategy, etc.?

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FIGURE 2 Forrester New Wave™: AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms, Q3 2021**THE FORRESTER NEW WAVE™****AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms**

Q3 2021



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FIGURE 3 Forrester New Wave™: AI-Enabled Consumer Intelligence Platforms Scorecard, Q3 2021

Company	Data sources	Data onboarding	Domains and languages	Search and insights	Analytics and reporting	UX and actionability	Data regulation	Product vision	Product roadmap	Market approach
Talkwalker	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Synthesio	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
NetBase Quid	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Sprinklr	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Brandwatch	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Linkfluence	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Resonate	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Digimind	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Khoros	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️

⬆️ Differentiated ⬆️ On par ⬆️ Needs improvement ⬆️ No capability

Vendor QuickCards

Forrester evaluated nine vendors and ranked them against 10 criteria. Here's our take on each.

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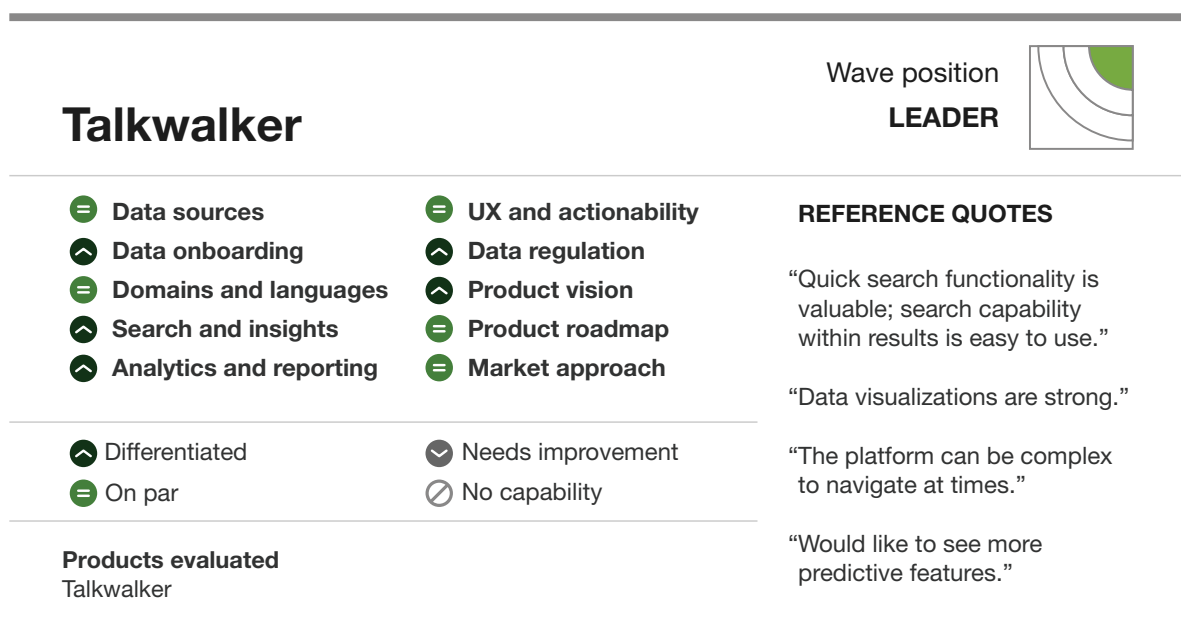
Talkwalker: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Talkwalker (see Figure 4):

- **Offers the strongest balance across search, insights discovery, and analytics.** Talkwalker's search balances capabilities for varied user needs with both quick and Boolean search. Analytics and reporting capabilities include a recommendation engine for prescriptive insights, robust capabilities for sharing dashboards to both users and nonusers, and alerts about unexpected consumer behavior changes.
- **Needs to strengthen its user experience (UX) and predictive capabilities.** Talkwalker continues to focus on UX improvements. Planned investment in R&D focuses on key areas that customers identify, including more automation of predictive and prescriptive insights.
- **Is a strong fit for enterprises operating across many regions and languages.** Talkwalker has capabilities across 187 languages, including language-agnostic search using automatic translation, with sentiment detection in half of those languages.

Talkwalker Customer Reference Summary

Talkwalker's reference customers appreciate the firm's strong dedication to their success. Individual customers use the platform across a range of areas and use cases, including brand, crisis, and competitor monitoring; social listening across brands; and white space analysis and innovation.

FIGURE 4 Talkwalker QuickCard

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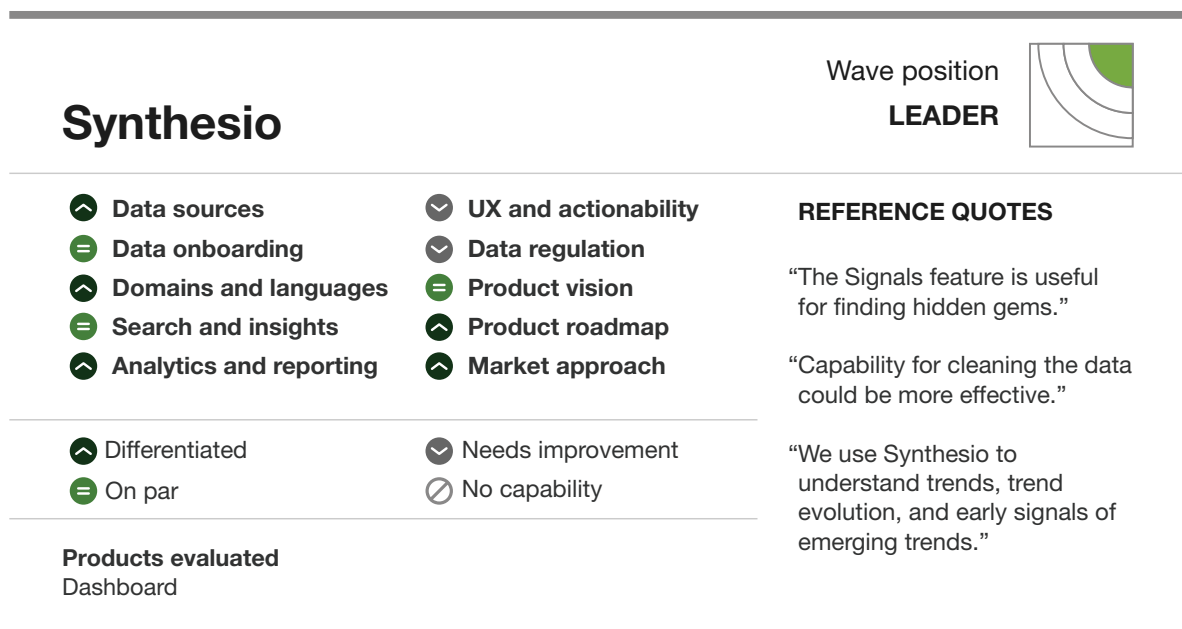
Synthesio: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Synthesio (see Figure 5):

- **Offers the strongest proactive explanatory capability.** Synthesio, an Ipsos company, incorporates extensive, proprietary analytics frameworks by use case that fuel its real-time alert function, Signals, which explains unexpected shifts via natural language generation (NLG) narratives.
- **Needs to strengthen off-the-shelf predictive capabilities.** Predictive models developed by Ipsos are currently available as services. Synthesio's roadmap includes incorporating predictive models into the platform for off-the-shelf prediction and quantification of future trends.
- **Is a best fit for enterprises seeking to turbocharge their market research function.** Synthesio's flexible service model, from do-it-yourself to full service, helps market researchers mature their ability to drive data-driven decision-making that matters across the functions they serve.

Synthesio Customer Reference Summary

Synthesio's reference customers tout the engaged, consultative, and thorough services partnership for getting them up and running. Longer-term customers praise the vendor's ambitious roadmap, which has showcased actionable, use-case-specific frameworks since its 2018 acquisition by Ipsos.

FIGURE 5 Synthesio QuickCard

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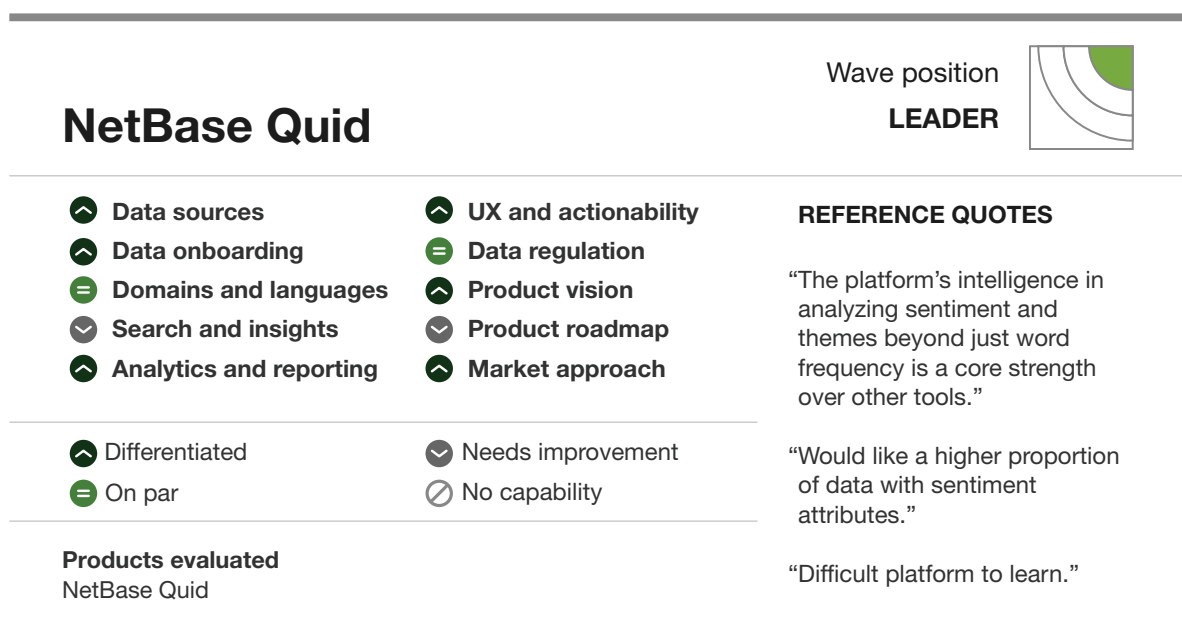
NetBase Quid: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that NetBase Quid (see Figure 6):

- **Offers the strongest capabilities across both social and customer-owned data sources.** NetBase Quid's expansive data sources and onboarding fuel its differentiating approach to sentiment and emotion: parsing positive and negative terms to extend what people say with a high probability of meaning that further enables that insight's actionability.
- **Still needs to focus on improving user experience.** UX optimization remains a work in progress following the early 2020 NetBase and Quid merger. The platform, for example, offers 100 shareable dashboard templates, including customization capabilities for expert users, but customers would benefit from a continued balance between richness in choices and simplicity.
- **Is the strongest fit for enterprises operating across many regions and languages.** The platform supports 199 languages across platform features as well as plug-and-play data integrations for a wide range of enterprise solutions, with more planned in the roadmap.

NetBase Quid Customer Reference Summary

NetBase Quid's reference customers have high praise for the platform's categorization of media conversations. One customer noted that the platform can be difficult to learn in a training session. In 2020, the vendor launched a certification program for learning the platform that has had high adoption.

FIGURE 6 NetBase Quid QuickCard

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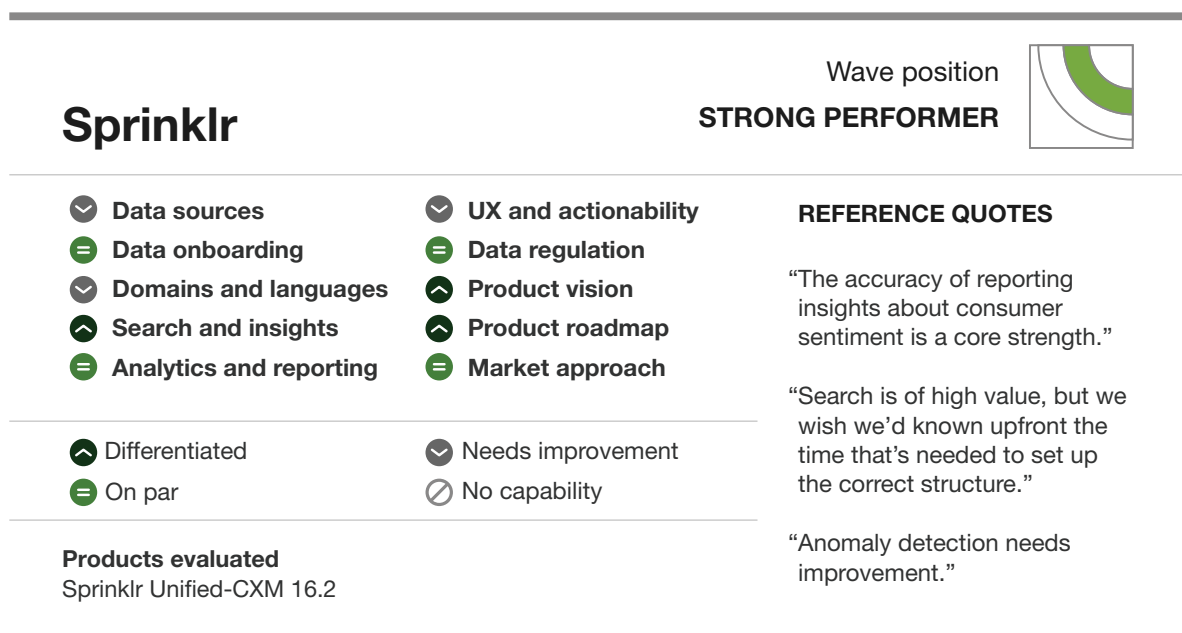
Sprinklr: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Sprinklr (see Figure 7):

- **Offers strong, proactive discovery capabilities.** The Smart Trends feature offers out-of-the-box, real-time trend detection relevant to brands, business verticals, and regions. The features work across data sources, from social data to owned customer care and survey data.
- **Needs to ensure consistent experience for customers.** Customer references cited variability in their experience with Sprinklr's initial platform setup for search and reports. Features have high value but sometimes fall short when implemented. One customer reference stated that they didn't understand what the Sprinklr team needed to know to enable setup for them.
- **Is a best fit for firms seeking CX management capabilities across the organization.** Sprinklr, fueled by a Q3 2020 investment from a private equity firm, has a robust roadmap focused on delivering a unified front office for delivering insights that enable actions by teams, including customer care, product management, marketing, brand, and whitespace or innovation.

Sprinklr Customer Reference Summary

Sprinklr's reference customers cite the vendor's promptness in helping with urgent tasks. They also note the accuracy of insights about consumer sentiment and emotion and the value of real-time analytics.

FIGURE 7 Sprinklr QuickCard

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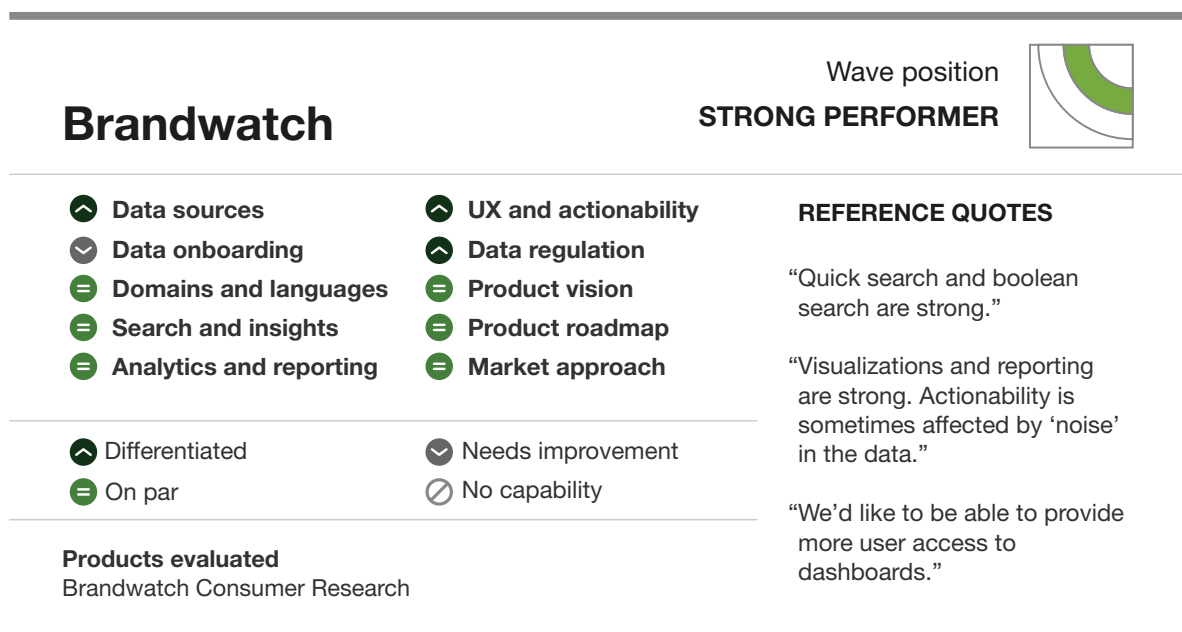
Brandwatch: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Brandwatch (see Figure 8):

- **Offers the strongest access to social data sources and proactive discovery.** Brandwatch provides broad and deep access to social and site data. Brandwatch's "built-in AI analyst," Iris, automatically detects peaks in social activity then uses NLG to explain the cause.
- **Still needs to improve data onboarding and segmentation of customer-owned data.** Currently in beta, Brandwatch will soon enable uploading data from spreadsheets locally or in the cloud and is considering new data connectors.
- **Is a best fit for firms' consumer research, PR, and influencer marketing.** Brandwatch's acquisition by leading PR and marketing company Cision closed in Q2 2021. The roadmap, supported by increased R&D investment, includes a broadened set of consumer intelligence use cases, including text analysis of survey responses alongside online data and ready-to-use social panels available in English, French, German, and Spanish.

Brandwatch Customer Reference Summary

Brandwatch's reference customers praise the vendor's support for getting up and running on the platform and for ongoing support, including broad access to training. While they find most features user friendly, one customer commented that some users are overwhelmed with options within functions.

FIGURE 8 Brandwatch QuickCard

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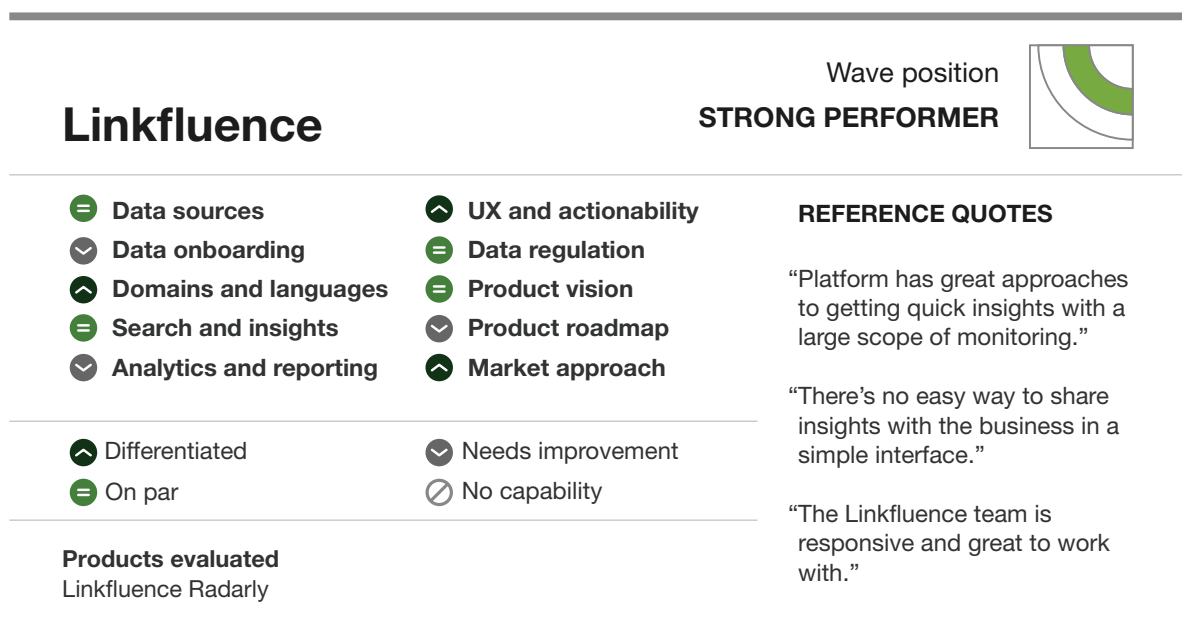
Linkfluence: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Linkfluence (see Figure 9):

- **Offers strong capabilities for global consumer brands.** Customers' use cases include brand and market evolution, market exploration, brand image and perception, and community mapping and analysis. The platform supports sentiment analysis of 63 languages, along with named entity recognition and entity disambiguation in 11 of those.
- **Needs to enable unsupervised trend detection and improve first-party data integration.** Linkfluence, acquired by media intelligence firm Meltwater in Q1 2021, expects increased R&D investment in the current and following year. The roadmap includes continuous strengthening of customer-owned data integration capabilities.
- **Is a best fit for global consumer brands that need services along with the platform.** Customer references praise the support from Linkfluence's services team, which includes customer success experts, project managers, analysts, and evangelists.

Linkfluence Customer Reference Summary

Linkfluence's reference customers cite the value of getting quick reads on campaigns and products. Areas for improvement cited include the ability to share reporting and visualizations from the platform itself or in other applications used in the company (e.g., Tableau or Slack).

FIGURE 9 Linkfluence QuickCard

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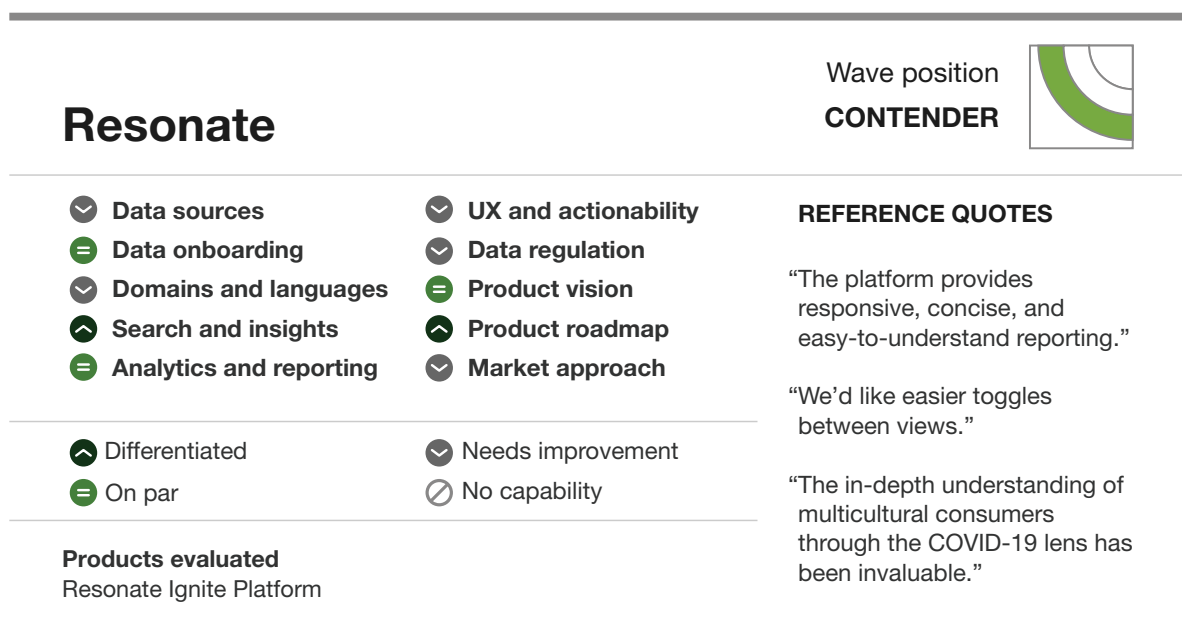
Resonate: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Resonate (see Figure 10):

- **Offers a unique approach to actionable insights that's specific to US customers.** Data from Resonate's monthly National Consumer Study is merged daily with billions of observed behavioral signals across millions of domains, including social and other digital channels. Resonate's AI capabilities then delivers insights on 230 million individual consumer profiles, covering intent, sentiment, demographics, and psychographics.
- **Needs to ensure that customers feel well informed about changes and enhancements.** Customer references cite large, positive business impact from use of Resonate's platform and customer support. They also said they'd benefit from more proactive information on its roadmap.
- **Is a best fit for firms that will benefit from Resonate's US-specific capabilities.** Resonate's AI-enabled value for actionability outpaces market research and data syndication companies' technology capabilities for analytics on consumer data.

Resonate Customer Reference Summary

Resonate's reference customers focus on use cases that include insights for persona development, segmentation, product development, personalization, and campaign and media planning execution. Ignite can be integrated into customers' applications, including marketing clouds, DMPs, and CRM.

FIGURE 10 Resonate QuickCard

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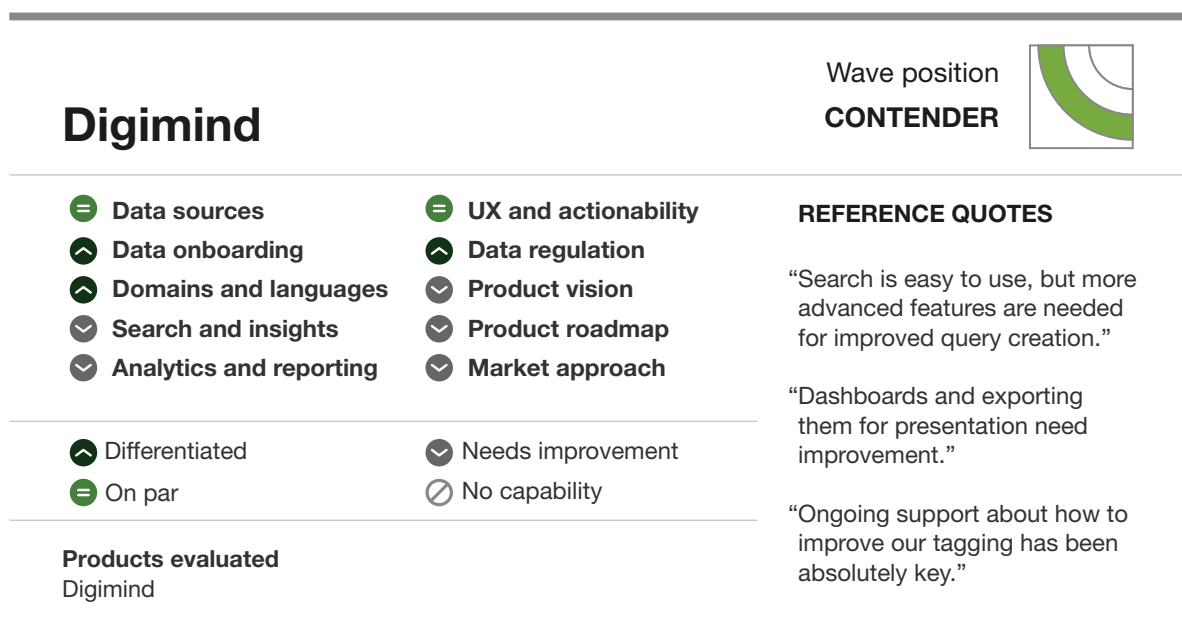
Digimind: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Digimind (see Figure 11):

- **Offers strong social data sources and connectors to internal sources.** Digimind's "5Ws" framework (what-when-where-who-how) organizes actionability across key concepts, media, influencers, and sentiment. In 2020, it added the capability to integrate customer care call logs and chat. Also new in 2020, customers can add new social data sources by connecting owned data to the platform or via the workflow automation integrator Zapier.
- **Still needs to improve AI-enabled consumer behavior detection.** Digimind's roadmap, fueled by a \$9 million capital investment in 2021, indicates a focus on more consumer data sources (e.g., panels), AI-enabled consumer behavior detection, and predictive reporting.
- **Is a strong fit for enterprises operating across many geographies.** Digimind supports data analysis in 180 languages, with natural language processing for 80 of those. Sentiment analysis with reinforcement learning is provided for English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, Russian, Thai, and Chinese.

Digimind Customer Reference Summary

Digimind's reference customers praise their account team's quick responsiveness and support in understanding and leveraging the platform's many options. One customer cited this help in maximizing the potential of the tool as "the reason we renew."

FIGURE 11 Digimind QuickCard

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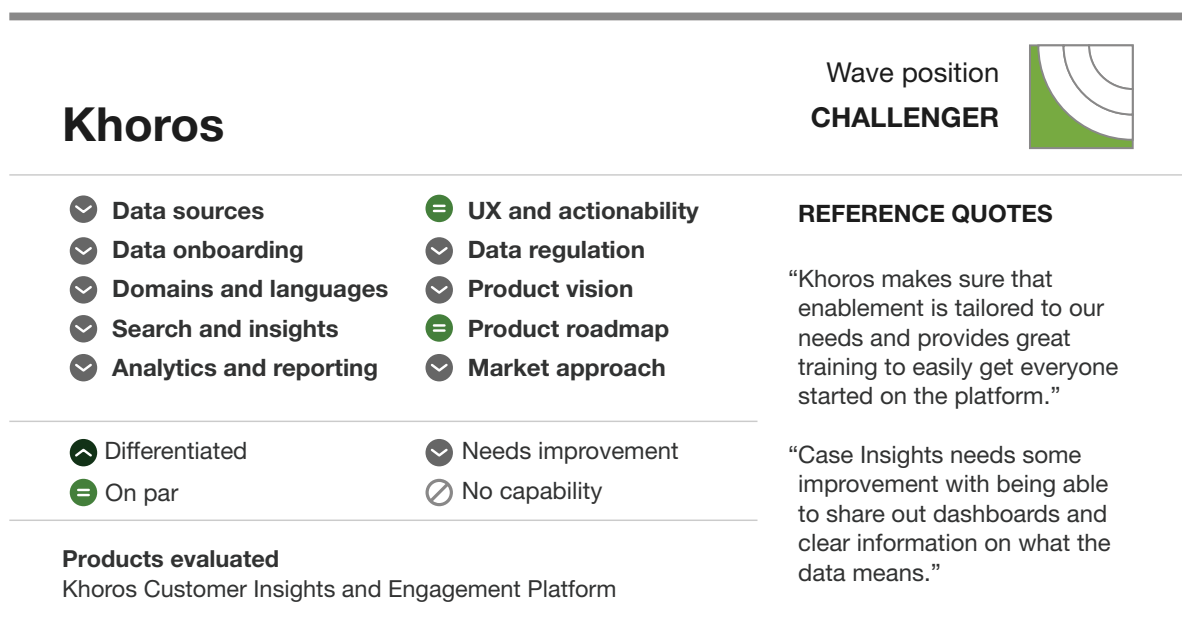
Khoros: Forrester's Take

Our evaluation found that Khoros (see Figure 12):

- **Offers the strongest capabilities for optimizing customer care across the enterprise.** The platform provides Brand Experience Score (BXS), a customer-specific KPI for evaluating each business (e.g., product) area's CX using AI-generated topic/classification and sentiment analysis of social, digital, customer voice and chat, and other data. BXS identifies cohorts for next best actions.
- **Is delivering value as it continues its integration of recently acquired solutions.** In 2021, Khoros acquired CX analytics solution Topbox. Single sign-on is enabled across the platform. Khoros also acquired flow.ai, an AI platform for designing and managing chatbots. On the roadmap is delivery of next best actions for customer care and marketing campaigns.
- **Is a best fit for companies seeking a strong focus on operational insights.** Customers cite a positive business impact on improving customer experience in agile cycles.

Khoros Customer Reference Summary

Khoros reference customers appreciate the ability to “get granular” in search. Customers also praise the self-help they find via Khoros Atlas, a peer-to-peer community that provides a connection between users and experts.

FIGURE 12 Khoros QuickCard

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Supplemental Material

The Forrester New Wave Methodology

We conducted primary research to develop a list of vendors that met our criteria for the evaluation and definition of this emerging market. We evaluated vendors against 10 criteria, seven of which we based on product functionality and three of which we based on strategy. We also reviewed market presence. We invited the top emerging vendors in this space to participate in an RFP-style demonstration and interviewed customer references. We then ranked the vendors along each of the criteria. We used a summation of the strategy scores to determine placement on the x-axis, a summation of the current offering scores to determine placement on the y-axis, and the market presence score to determine marker size. We designated the top-scoring vendors as Leaders.

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