

**An Irish-based company is developing a 'smart mark' that lets people tag content on social networks with a scale of up to 32 different emotions. Gordon Smith reports.**

## When 'like' just doesn't sum up how you feel

**A**s with many good ideas made in Italy, this one started over the dinner table. What if there was a more accurate way for people to express how they feel about a brand or a piece of content that they see online than just clicking a 'like' button? A start-up addressing this issue – what's known as semantic feedback – combines Italian ingenuity with Irish infrastructure.

Dublin-based B-Smark has just launched a public beta of its first product to come out of its research into sentiment, mood and emotions. MySmark lets people tag content on a social network according to their mood using a 'smart mark' the company has developed, which is a coloured widget that people can set with up to 32 different emotions. Once they have set up their page in mysmark.com, anyone can 'smark' directly from that page or from their Facebook, Twitter or Google accounts. Links to other social media platforms are in development.

According to Nicola Farronato, B-Smark's founder, that ability

to obtain instant feedback from consumers who express how they feel about a product or an event is a major attraction for brands and content providers that already use traditional methods of market research. Unlike the historical nature of surveys, Farronato says the value of smarks is that they can be captured in real time.

For example, that could be while a concert is happening so the emotion of the moment is captured immediately, rather than the person having to remember the feeling weeks or months later. B-Smark is already in discussions with brands in Italy and Ireland, and it is also looking to the UK and US where digital marketing is at its most advanced, Farronato said.

Brands could encourage consumers to share their smart marks on Facebook or Twitter by offering something in return. "Look at what's happening online: reward systems are becoming a commodity. Users look for a reward for doing anything extra," Farronato said.

The company turned one year

old in September. The concept began in Italy, but reams of red tape and a lack of support for entrepreneurship in their native country saw Farronato and his fellow founders consider alternative locations. They looked at the UK and Switzerland before choosing the National Digital Research Centre in Dublin as the company's headquarters. Another attraction of Ireland is the more advanced approach to marketing here, which Farronato said makes it a suitable platform to build the company for serving key international markets.

US native Richard Bendis is to advise on strategy for the North American market. He is a successful entrepreneur, corporate executive, venture capitalist, investment banker, innovation and technology based economic development leader, international speaker and consultant in innovation and economy building.

Two Italians have joined the advisory board, Stefano Camatti and Professor Piero Formica, who has three decades of experience in economics, innovation and entrepreneurship. Irishman Noel Toolan, a longtime marketing veteran of well-known food and drink brands, has also come on board and is an investor. He said his involvement stems from an interest in how technology integrates with marketing.

Irishman Martin Curley, Intel's global head of innovation, is mentoring Farronato. "All new entrepreneurs need as much encouragement and mentoring that they can get. I saw in Nicola a young entrepreneur with energy and a passion for his idea. This is worthy of encouragement and coaching," he said.

Curley believes it's too early to gauge the potential for smart marks but he says the concept shows a lot of promise. "Basing their work on Plutchik's theory of emotion is a good foundation to introduce a new innovation to the world of social computing. Feedback from the early adopters will be an important litmus test for the company," he said.



NICOLA FARRONATO

This smark is about ...

Tips:

- write a free text here and/or insert images using the button below (note that drag and drop doesn't work in Opera)
- choose where you want to share your smark
- select your emotion on the coloured wheel, then post it; press reset if you need to change it
- press "x" to clear all and start over again

Image search Go!

What do you feel?

Primary emotions