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How Hershey uses Handraise to turn AI perception into strategic opportunities

Hershey's communications team uses Handraise as part of its everyday workflow to understand what AI models say about its brands, identify the narratives and sources shaping those answers, and uncover opportunities to strengthen its positioning.



Featuring

Ashleigh Pollart

Manager, Strategic Communications and Reputation Intelligence
The Hershey Company

Consumers aren’t just searching. They’re asking AI for answers.

For more than a century, Hershey has earned its place in households one shelf, one story and one headline at a time. Now the way people look for answers is changing. Alongside traditional search, more consumers are asking AI models directly, and those models respond with a single, synthesized answer that can shape how people see a brand before they reach the aisle.



> “We recognized that AI was becoming a new audience—a channel that was not just delivering, but synthesizing in a way that actively shaped opinions and recommendations.”

Ashleigh Pollart
Manager, Strategic Communications and Reputation Intelligence · The Hershey Company

Hershey’s team wanted to know what that new audience was hearing. Before they could shape it, they had to see it clearly, so they set out to answer three questions.

How do AI models describe us today?	A clear baseline for Hershey and its brands across major models.
What’s driving those answers?	The narratives and sources shaping what the models say.
Where can we improve?	Opportunities to strengthen accuracy, authority, share of answer and recommendation.

Handraise uncovers what traditional monitoring misses and recommends what to do next

Handraise combines narrative intelligence, competitive analysis, and AI model perception to help communications teams understand how their brands are being positioned, identify emerging risks and opportunities, and get clear recommendations on where and how to act.

Model perception

A clear baseline of how major AI models describe Hershey and its brands.

Citation analysis

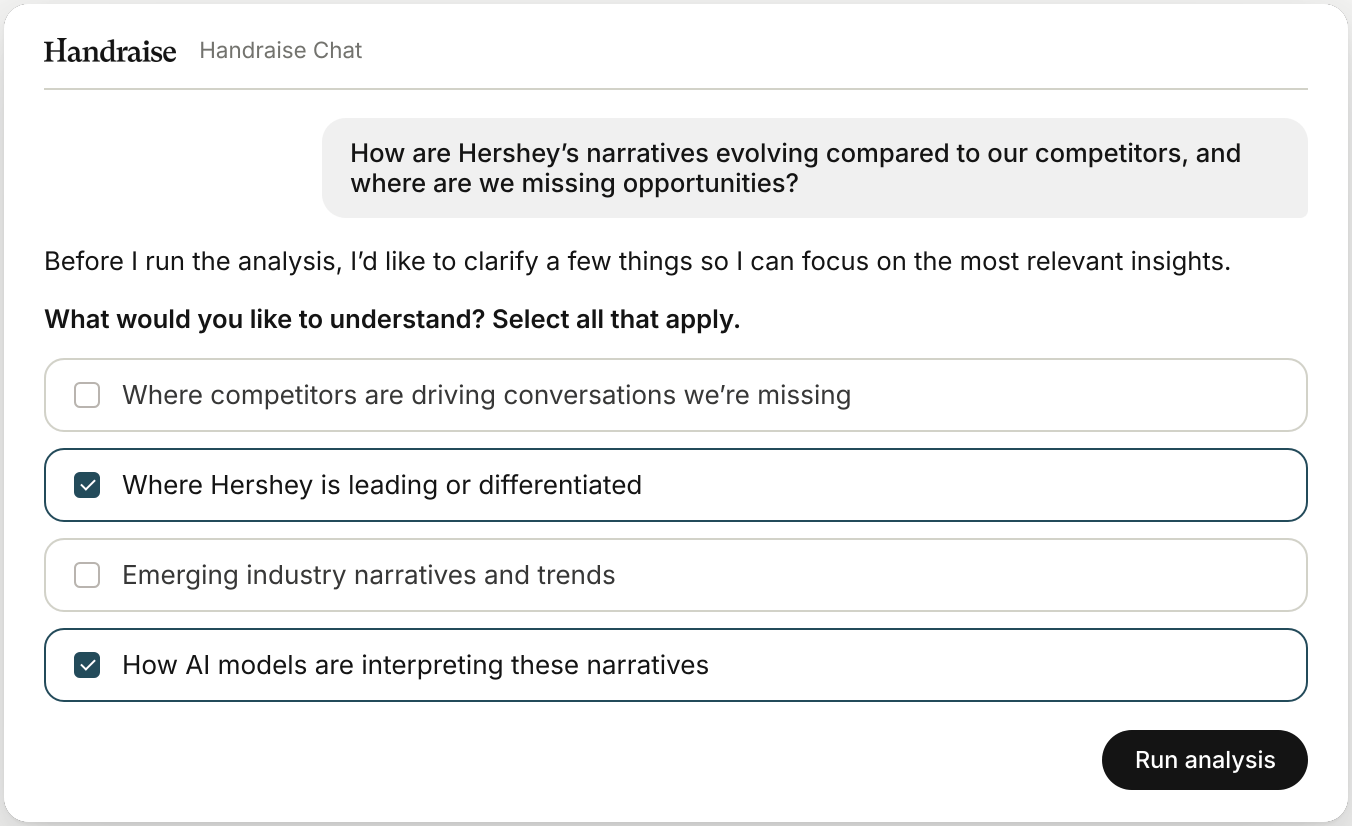
The sources and narratives driving what AI models say, not just whether the brand appears.

Narrative intelligence

Understand the narratives shaping Hershey's reputation and how its positioning compares with competitors.

Handraise Chat

Ask questions in plain language to uncover insights, explore opportunities, and get recommended actions.



Illustrative example: Handraise Chat's intent engine confirms scope before it runs an analysis

How Hershey uncovered a competitive opportunity in the GLP-1 conversation with Handraise

Competitive tracking wasn't new for Hershey. What changed was the speed and depth of insight. With Handraise Chat, the team could quickly analyze emerging industry narratives, compare competitor positioning, and identify where Hershey stood apart. That became especially valuable in the growing conversation around GLP-1s, where Handraise helped uncover an important competitive opportunity.



> "Analyzing competitor narratives through Handraise Chat allowed us to quickly realize we were one of the only companies among our peers leaning into our own research to share our point of view on GLP-1s—a hot topic for many brands, but particularly for a company with indulgent treats."



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While many food brands were reacting to the GLP-1 conversation, Hershey was among the few using its own research to inform its point of view. Handraise helped the team recognize that differentiation and understand how competitors were approaching the issue. More importantly, this approach extends beyond any single analysis. Handraise is part of how Hershey's communications team identifies which narratives to address, what content to create, which sources to strengthen, and where cross-functional alignment is needed.

Faster intelligence that helps Hershey cut through the noise and act on what matters most

Research that once required multiple tools and hours of manual analysis now comes together far faster. With Handraise built into its workflow, Hershey's team can spend less time gathering information and more time interpreting findings, identifying opportunities, and acting on strategic recommendations.

Before		With Handraise
Research fragmented across multiple tools	→	One systematic, scalable process
Hours upon hours of manual analysis	→	Competitive and narrative context, much faster
More room for human error	→	Time spent interpreting findings, aligning partners and acting on priorities

Communications decisions informed by Handraise	Informed by
Which narratives to address	Narrative trends across Hershey and its peers
What content to create	Gaps in what peers and AI answers are saying
Which sources to strengthen	The sources AI models draw on to describe Hershey's brands
Where cross-functional alignment is needed	One shared view for communications and partner teams

> "A dedicated thought partner who has been trained on your key narratives and messaging, while also knowing exactly what's happening across peers, consumers and the macroenvironment—and most importantly, what to do about it."



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Ashleigh Pollart's advice for communications teams starting this work

Her first piece of advice is to treat AI as an audience that perceives your brand, not simply as another channel. From there, she outlined six priorities for building a more effective approach.

Build a focused question library

Start from the real questions your stakeholders ask.

Baseline across several models

Establish where you stand across the major AI models.

Follow the sources

Look at what sits behind the answers, not just whether your brand appears.

Connect findings to action

Strengthen owned sources of truth, earn credible third-party corroboration and align language across channels.

Measure over time

Track whether accuracy, citation quality, share of answer and recommendation improve.

Make it cross-functional

Content, digital, insights, brand, legal and technical partners working from the same priorities.

> "Communications can lead the narrative, but lasting influence requires content, digital, insights, brand, legal and technical partners working from the same priorities, and most importantly, consistent messaging."

Ashleigh Pollart
Manager, Strategic Communications and Reputation Intelligence · The Hershey Company

