



**University
of Victoria**

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA NEWS RELEASE

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Gustavson Brand Trust Index reveals consumers' trust in brands is at an all-time low

The Gustavson Brand Trust study shows that faith in brands is on the decline, even as society becomes more reliant on certain services and products during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In April, the brand trust research team at the Gustavson School of Business mobilized a follow-up study to their 2020 report, conducted annually in January since 2015, to gauge changes in consumer trust in the wake of COVID-19.

“While trust in key institutions has been eroding significantly over the past few years, the average brand trust scores for all brands surveyed in 2020 are at an all-time low,” said Saul Klein, dean of the Gustavson School of Business.

Klein said this can be attributed to the rise in consumer skepticism, with consumers growing more conscious of their purchasing habits while closely watching the values brands stand for.

“Brands that were unable to make products available to customers during the pandemic saw a decline in trust scores,” said Klein. “For example, despite the fact that Lysol and Clorox enjoyed increased demand, they lost trust among consumers due to the scarcity of their products on shelves.”

The initial 2020 study was conducted between January and February of this year and measured 7,800 Canadian consumer opinions about 342 well-known corporate and product brands across 27 categories. This study showed that Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), Canadian Automobile Association, Costco, Home Hardware and Home Depot ranked as the top brands overall.

A second, separate study was conducted in April and measured opinions from 1,050 Canadians of 105 brands from the original list. This post-COVID study indicated the most trusted brands during the pandemic were Canada Post, Shoppers Drug Mart/Pharmaprix and CTV News

The Gustavson Brand Trust Index investigates consumer trust, the factors that affect it, the brands that succeed at it, and the brands that struggle with it. The team at the Gustavson School of Business established the index in 2015 to raise awareness of the role trust plays in the minds of consumers when making purchasing decisions. The index highlights how shared values, relationship management and customer experience influence consumer trust. It also measures the relationships between brand performance, social equity, trust and advocacy for brands in Canada.

Other key findings

Trust in Canadian telecom companies is on the rise. Past year-on-year results had telecom companies showing signs of trouble with nearly all of the companies seeing a decline in their brand trust scores. This year, however, saw three out of the big four telecom companies show significant improvement after the pandemic struck.

Millennials are less trusting compared to any other generation. Millennials assign their loyalties to organizations that are proactive in solving long-standing social issues and contribute to making the world a better place. For example, Lush, with its history of donating to progressive groups and advocating for many causes, was the most trusted brand in Canada among ages 18-35.

The new role of a brand's supply chain. The pandemic reinforced the need for brands to pay attention to their supply chains. For an organization to be trusted and seen as credible, it must ensure the availability and competitiveness of its products.

Read the [full report](#).

Brand Trust Index Webinar

Join us for a discussion on the Gustavson Brand Trust Index, and what brand trust looks like for businesses post-COVID-19. Guests include Saul Klein, dean of the Gustavson School of Business, Jeff Walker, CEO of CAA North & East Ontario, Sandra Sanderson, senior vice-president, marketing, SOBEYS, and Tom Newitt, vice-president of marketing for A&W.

This free webinar will take place on:

June 17, from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm (EST)

To register, email: gustavsontrust@uvic.ca

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A media kit containing [high-resolution photos/videos, etc.] is available [here](#).

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