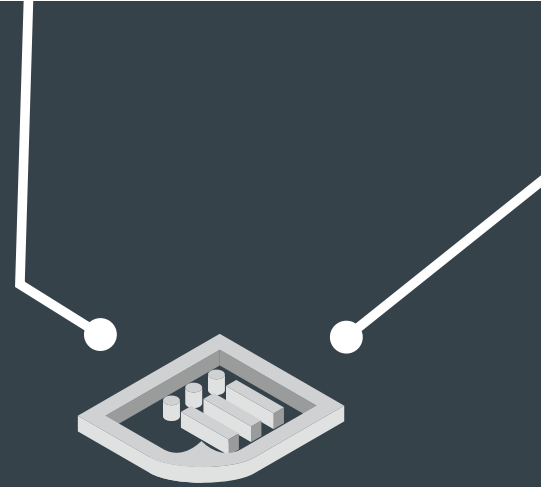


New Truths for Brands Study

A behavioral blueprint to enable brands to build trust among contemporary consumers



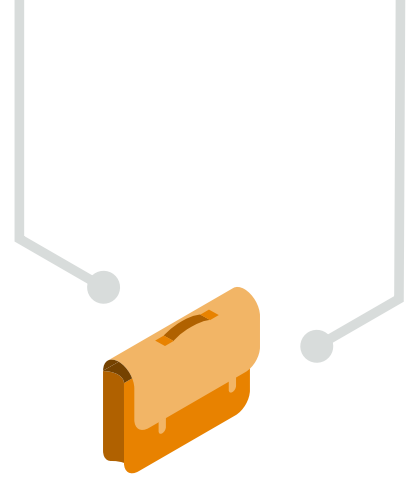
metia



Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	5
The evolution of truth	7
Succeeding in the new truth paradigm	9
The new truth study: Background and methodology	11
Validating customer truths to drive action	12
The new truth about customers	14
Customer feedback truths: Family first and quality matters	15
Building brand trust	23
New truths on brand's burden of proof	26
The brand markers of truth	28
Rebuilding trust with new truths	29
The final truth	31
About Metia	32

This report is produced by the Metia Insight and Analytics group, a team of specialists in human behavioral research, social ethnography, data, science, social media, and analytics.



Executive summary

The mechanisms for determining what is true and who is being truthful have changed. Choosing which brands you allow to become a meaningful part of individual and family life involves a complex set of intuitive and emotive reactions to everything that consumers see, hear, and experience.

The Metia New Truths for Brands Study explores the evolving relationship between consumers and brands against a backdrop of growing distrust of the media, advertising, and corporations as a whole. The study applied a next-generation social insight platform, together with visual and linguistic machine learning to get beyond the rational view of brand truth that typical research studies present.

The study reflects the views of 3,783 US consumers between the ages of 24 and 65 who worked together as a community to contribute a new consumer perspective on what brands need to know about their customers, and the burden of proof that brands must now satisfy before they are accepted as truthful, trusted, and authentic.

The study uncovers 10 new truths designed to help brands think differently about how to create emotive connections and authentic experiences:

1) The way to my heart is through my family. Family can mean anything from a herd of goats (me and my pets), to a three-layer, multi-generational household. Connected brands understand there is now no normal. Connected brands navigate this complexity with empathy and humor.

2) Variety matters to me. Brand experiences are starting to feel bland as they are more rigidly defined by traditional data, CRM technology, and marketing automation. Consumers are craving diversity.

3) Equality is the new green. Green credentials remain critical, but the new differentiating standard is a brand's record and behavior around equality of access for customers, and equality of opportunity for employees.

4) Roots define reactions. Consumers' emotional and intuitive reactions to brands are defined by their social, ethnic, tribal, and geographic roots. Successful brands understand both where people live their lives today and, importantly, also where they came from.

5) Don't bother bending the truth. The days of getting away with extravagant claims that don't stand up to scrutiny are over. Consumers are savvy and more educated, and they have access to peers, influencers, and experts. All claims need to be self-evident in product and service experiences and ratified by the tribe.

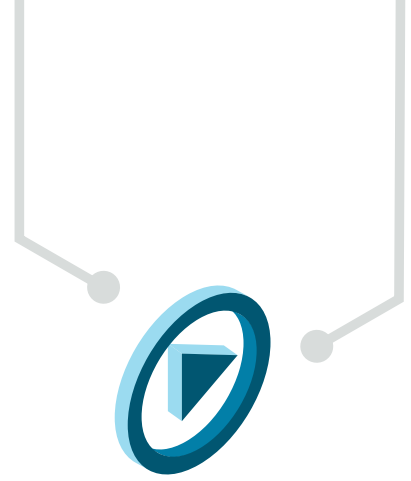
6) Don't be afraid to share. Teaching consumers about products, ingredients, manufacturing process, and corporate culture builds confidence. Brands must be open about how they operate so they can be perceived as having nothing to hide. Educating customers builds trust.

7) Show healthy respect. Claims of healthy ingredients and contributing to a healthy lifestyle are subject to the highest standards of consumer scrutiny. Consumers know what is good and bad for them. If products and individual ingredients don't stand up to detailed scrutiny, they find another.

8) Choose your friends wisely. Brands are considered guilty by association if they support or are connected with public figures or organizations that consumers don't trust.

9) Don't be greedy. If a brand has a reputation for exploiting either suppliers, employees, or customers, everything they do is considered likely to be a lie. They are believed capable of saying and doing anything in pursuit of profit.

10) Brands can ONLY behave their way back to trust. The overarching truth revealed in the study is that brands can't talk or advertise their way back into a consumer's confidence. Trust comes first from behavior, second from tribal validation, and finally by creating meaningful, personal, and authentic experiences that create contextually relevant emotional moments.



Introduction

Why does truth matter?

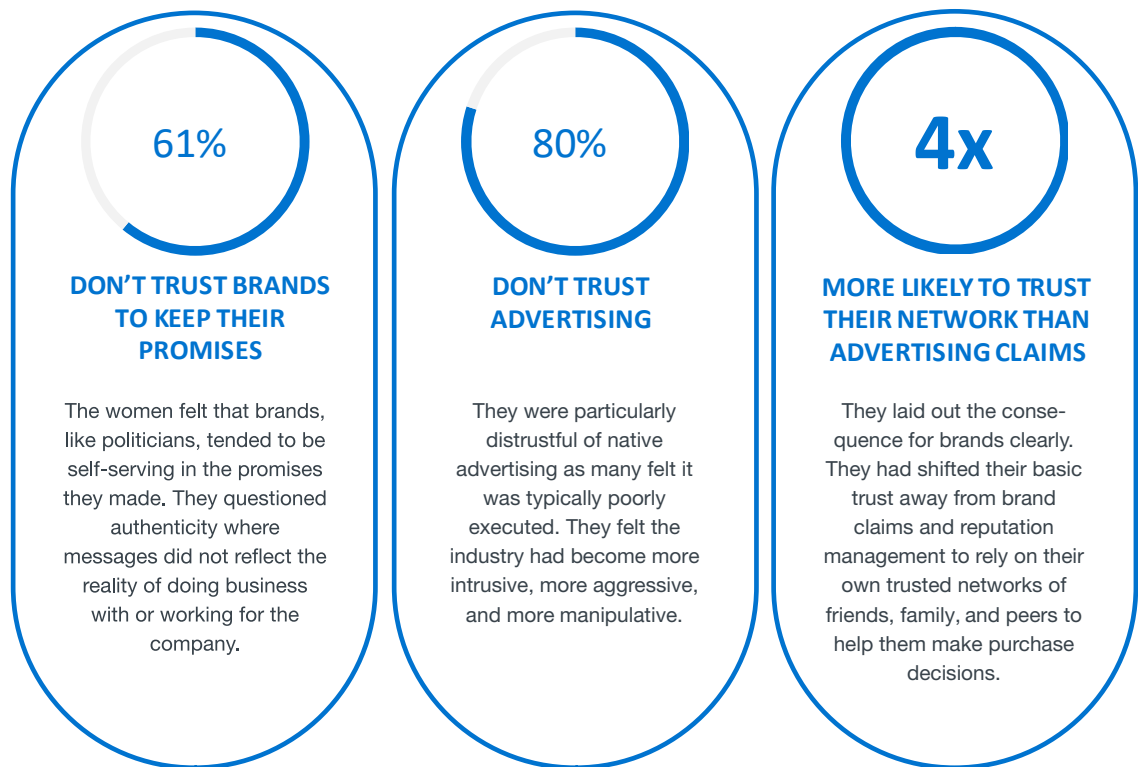
“Anyone who doesn’t take truth seriously in small matters cannot be trusted in large ones either.”

Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

Once firmly the domain of philosophers and thinkers, understanding truth is now an integral part of daily discourse for brands.

Successful brands have recognized the need to evolve in order to survive and flourish in a world that is increasingly consumer and community-powered. Brands are operating in an environment where trust in corporations, advertising, and political leaders is diminishing rapidly. Getting to the truth and being truthful has never mattered more to marketers.

A 2017 survey of 3,000 American women revealed:

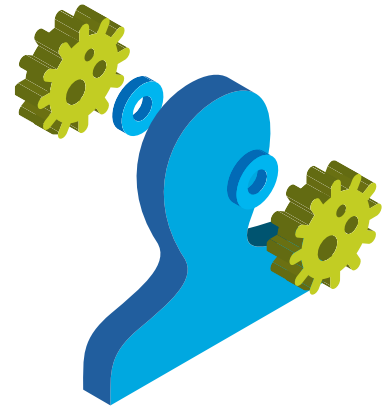


Source: The Women and Trust Survey—U SA February 2017— A collaboration between SheSpeaks and Womankind

This highlights an imminent need for brands to reconnect with customers in new ways that challenge these concerning perceptions. The notion of what truth is and what it means for brands has changed.

Metia's New Truths for Brands Study was conceived to explore how brands can respond to the emerging realities of this modern landscape. Using new data collection and machine-learning analysis techniques, the study gets beyond common understandings and identifies new customer connection points that will foster deeper trust between consumers and brands.

It is critical for commercial survival that brands understand what is perceived as true and trusted, and what is now designated as "fake news" or fake behavior that engender distrust.



The evolution of truth

“Truth? Don’t bend; don’t water it down; don’t try to make it logical; don’t edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.”

Franz Kafka (1883–1924)

From logical and pragmatic to emotional and intuitive

The pursuit of truth was traditionally rooted in the intersection of scientific language and philosophical thought. Outcomes or actions were described through a set of rational and logical arguments that eventually allowed something to become accepted as universally true. For example, if water consistently became a gas at 100°C., the boiling point of water was 100°C. If enough scientists agreed, and it happened often enough, the boiling point of water became a scientific truth.

Unfortunately, defining truth for modern brands is not nearly as simple.

Consumers are surrounded by endless social and traditional media channels purporting expertise and infinite wisdom on every issue, brand, or product. Defining and recognizing things to be true, authentic, and trustworthy consequently demands an evolved burden of proof.

Figure 1: Evolving the burden of proof of truth

The Traditions of Truth	AUTHORITY	Being confident and credible in your knowledge and beliefs and arguing strongly and consistently based on your own evidence
	COHERENCE	Demonstrating a pathway to truth, one action leads to another and they in turn lead others that deliver logical and expected outcomes
	CONSISTENCY	Apply the same forces, behaviors, and processes repeatedly and the same outcome will be achieved
	CUSTOM & CULTURE	Truths defined via authority, consistency, and coherence become engrained within a culture and customs evolve around them
New Truth	INTUITION	Outcomes and traditionally accepted truths now need to also feel right and resonate with individual and community beliefs
	EMOTION	Truth is defined through emotional moments and authentic connections are now a basic requirement to drive and maintain brand trust

New truth for brands is not rational. New truth is defined and confirmed by the community, not by your corporate headquarters. Trust of brands is rooted in actions and words, which demand emotional and intuitive ratification by both the individual consumers and their chosen tribe.

Consumers vote with their voices and their feet. If they don't like how brands talk, behave, or interact, they exclude them from their world.

Recent [research](#) by Salesforce has shown that 60% of consumers are likely to switch brands if a company isn't socially responsible and 80% of business professionals believe companies have a responsibility to go beyond profit to make an impact on society.

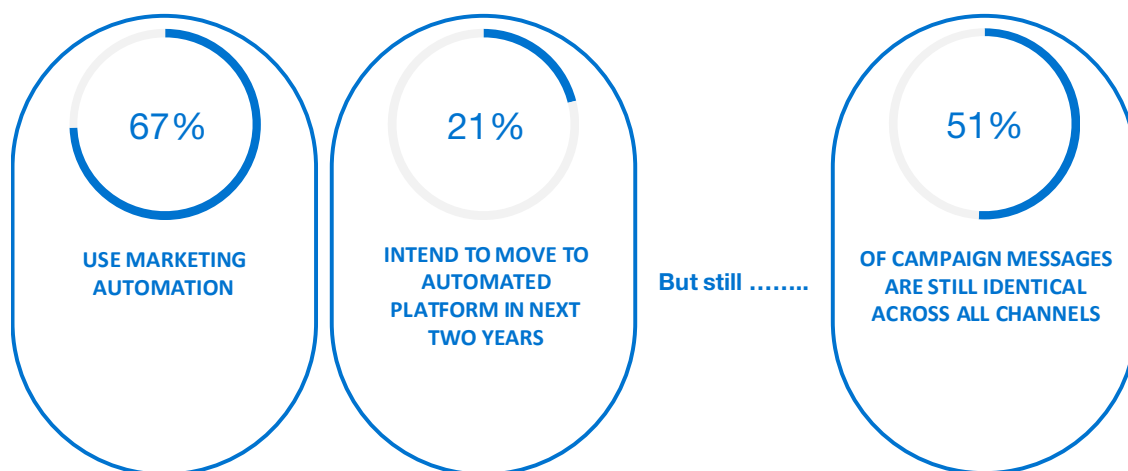
Brands that are trusted are those that share and mirror consumer values. Simply providing the products and services they need is not enough.



Succeeding in the new truth paradigm

New truth needs new data

Technology and big data have been hailed as the magical solutions to understanding customer truths and delivering personalized content and experiences directly to individuals. Salesforce's 2017 global State of Marketing study revealed some core patterns among enterprise marketers:



Source: Salesforce "State of Marketing" (2017)

While standardizing around major market solutions seems like a logical and appropriate approach, ironically, the pursuit of common understanding and common execution may be taking brands further in the opposite direction.

The drive for automation means that brands risk defaulting to common patterns, processes, sales funnels, and paths to conversion. Data alone is not enough.

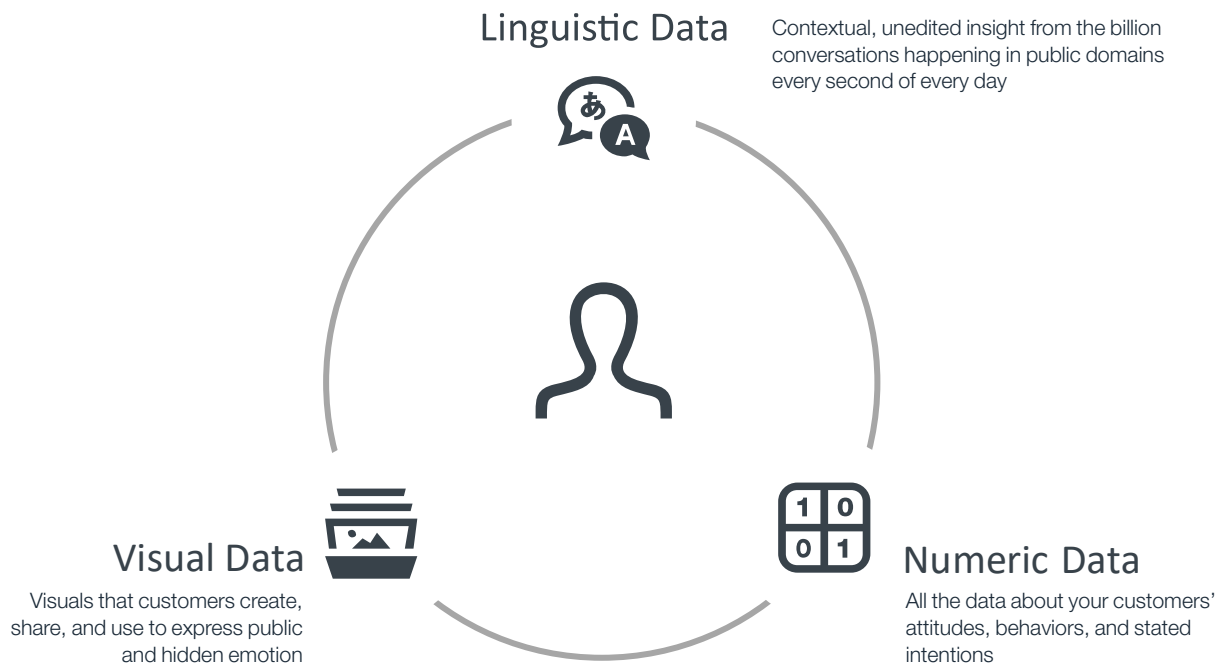
If every brand accesses the same data, applies the same analysis tools, and uses the same trigger marketing methodologies, the result is neither new truths nor more authentic experiences. Standardizing approaches creates less differentiation, less authenticity, and less opportunity to emotionally connect. Current and common data collection modalities don't support brands in pursuing new truths. This requires brands to think differently about what data is and where it comes from. For example:

- Standard surveys rely on claimed behavior and the researcher's agenda.
- Behavioral metrics focus on the past.
- Algorithmic predictions lead to highly scripted experiences.

New truth is multidimensional, so the data used to uncover and support it needs to change accordingly. The future of effective data lies at the intersection of what people do, what people say, and how they see the world.

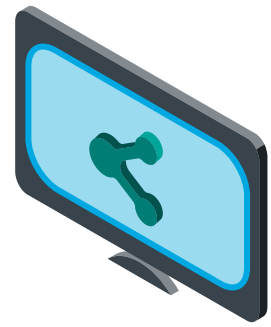
This means that brands must look for insight not just in numbers but within words and images too. This is the new data triumvirate.

Figure 2: The new data triumvirate



Successful brands will be the ones that know where to find this new data, learn how to listen to it effectively, and discover how to draw new insights from it.

Ultimately, truly successful brands will be those that actively respond to what they have learned from all these different perspectives.



The New Truths for Brands Study: Background and methodology

Using visual and linguistic data to uncover new brand truths

Metia conducted the New Truths for Brands Study 2017 using a suite of emerging linguistic and visual analytics techniques.

Visual and linguistic data was collected using a platform that allows customers in targeted demographics to respond to research questions using photos, videos, and text. Using this tool, research respondents can post a visual and explain the rationale for their choice. Machine learning technology is then applied to process and analyze the content of the image and the words explaining it, deriving quantified insights from the qualitative imagery.

In addition to the deep insights revealed through the unique posts, each one is subject to multiple peer reviews, either validating or challenging the story the respondent is telling.

The study asked a geographic- and gender-representative US population between the ages of 24 and 65 to post images to explain their feeling on three topics relating to different versions of truth.

Getting to both sides of the truth	Original images posted	Peer reviews/ validations	TOTAL responses
CUSTOMERS AND THEIR TRUTH Most brands that we buy from or work with today are very focused on trying to understand the “truth” behind who their customers are and what they care about. Please take a photograph that best describes the “truth” that you think businesses need to know about you to be part of your life.	50	1,261	1,311
BRANDS AND NEW TRUTH Think of a brand you believe is NOT “telling the truth” and take a picture that explains why you feel this way.	50	980	1,030
Think of a brand that you consider to be “telling the truth” and take a picture that explains why you feel this way.	50	1,422	1,472
TOTAL	150	3,663	3,813

Validating customer truths to drive action

Each picture tells an individual truth but it does not mean that each and every truth should be a focus for brands.

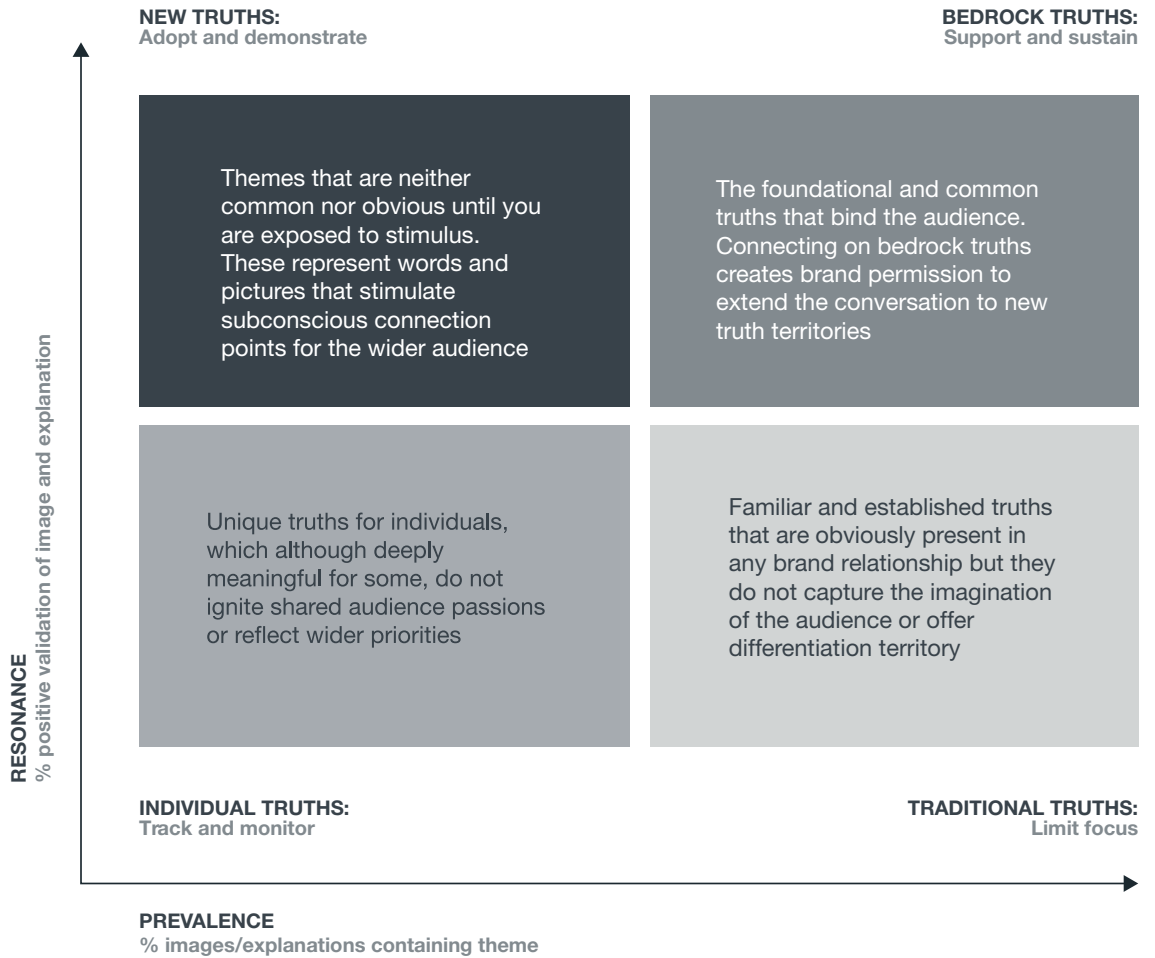
The insight process reveals emotive connections through the power of the individual images but actionability comes through validating the resonance of each truth with others in the target audience.

Priorities for action are set by analyzing two concepts:

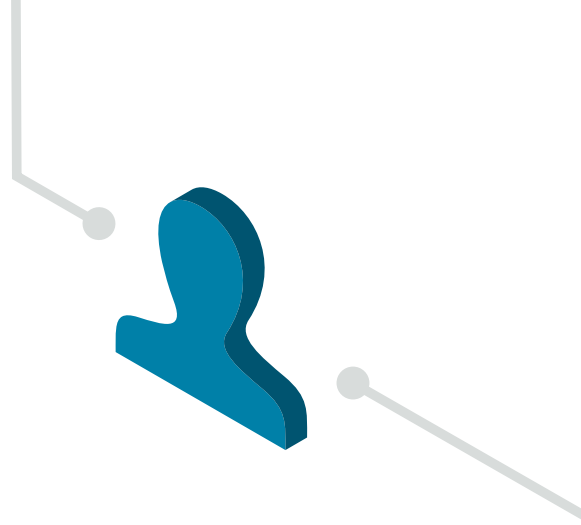
- **Resonance:** positive peer validation that the image is a valid and meaningful response to the survey question
- **Prevalence:** The percentage of times that an image or text theme occurs in the data set

Figure 3 shows that plotting resonance and prevalence against each other reveals four different truth typologies that require differing responses from brands.

Figure 3: Prioritizing new truths to drive actions



The results presented in the remainder of this report use this analysis framework to help brands think differently about what they do and say to ensure that they are authentic, prioritizing the right messages and creating a new shared truth with their customers.



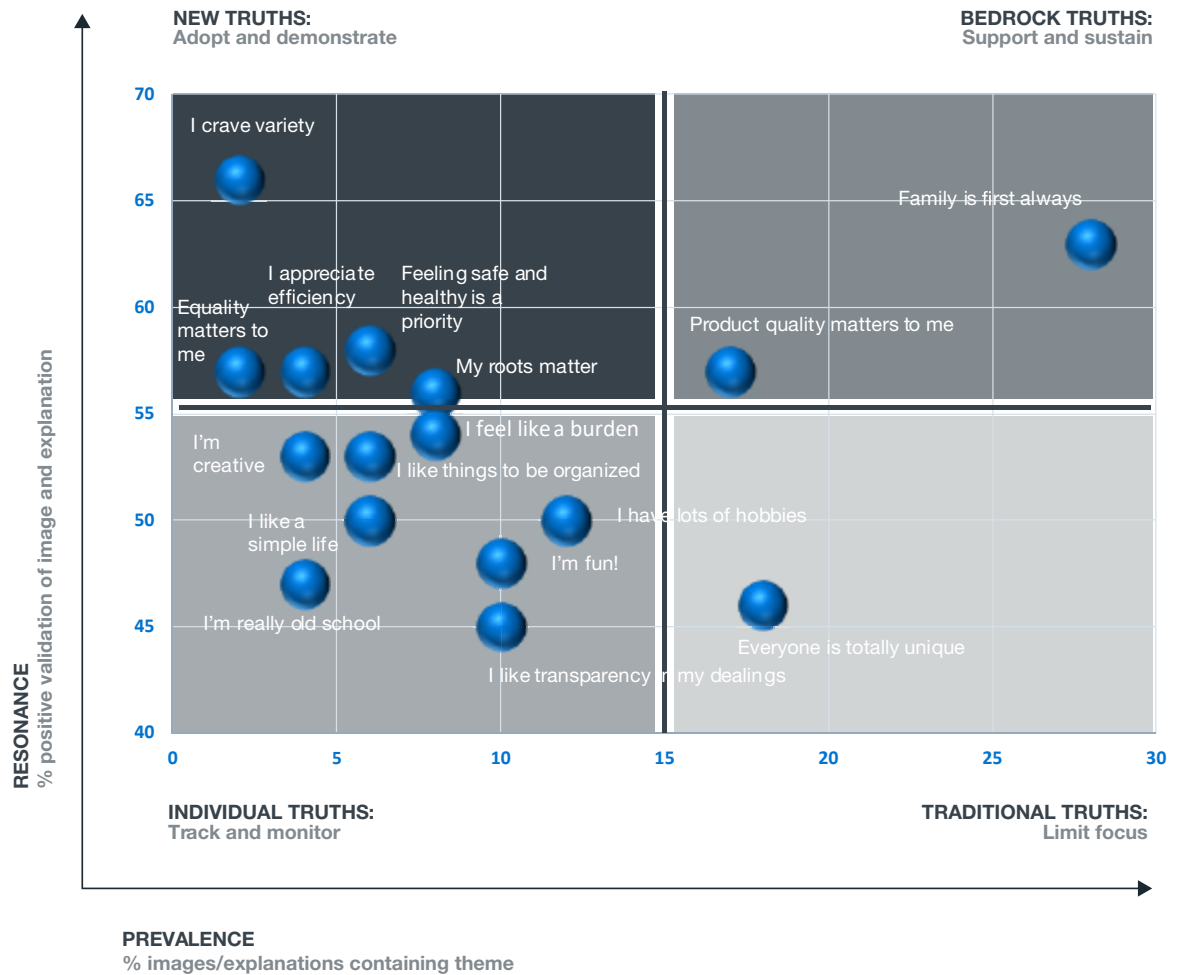
The new truth about customers

The thing you need to know about me is ...

The selected consumers were asked to take a photograph that best describes the truths that businesses needed to know about them to provide products and experiences that were meaningful in their lives.

The visual and linguistic analytics applied to the responses uncovered 16 truths, which have been classified based on their resonance and prevalence in the audience feedback.

Figure 4: Resonance and prevalence of key themes in customer responses



Customer bedrock truths: Family first and quality matters

Bedrock truths are the fundamentals that every brand needs to understand and respond to if they want permission to play in new truth territory.

The New Truths for Brands Study reveals that understanding family context and providing high-quality products and services that flourish in that specific environment are basic requirements in any brand story.

The notion of what constitutes a family has undergone a radical transformation in the past 20 years. Less than half the US population (46%) live in “traditional” households. The UK is similar; only 35% of the UK population are considered to live in social groups that would traditionally have been defined as nuclear families.

The validated images curated through the New Truths for Brands Study depict the richness, diversity, and colorful nature of the evolving family unit. From dogs to goats to multicultural households. Families provide the context that allows brands to connect with individual customers more deeply.

Figure 5: The visual truth about the meaning of family



"My loving and faithful dog. He needs grain free meat rich food, nice smelling shampoo that's good for his coat and skin. Less toxic safe."

*F | 58 | Amarillo, TX
#Family Safe/Healthy*



"I have a precious baby and I need companies to know I need her to have the best quality diapers and products! With honest ingredients."

*F | 21 | Ellenton, FL
#Family, Product/Service Quality, Safe/Healthy*



"The truth is moms want to look good but we need shopping to be simple yet high quality. We love our kids but want to still be ourselves too."

*F | 33 | La Mesa, CA
#Family, Product/Service Quality, Simple*



"I am family oriented. My life revolves around my family and their well being. I need products that are going to benefit them and our home."

*F | 26 | Orlando, FL
#Family*



"I'm a family man that wants to spend time with my wife- make my life simpler and easier and I'll appreciate your company."

*M | 32 | Los Angeles, CA
#Family, Simple*



"The truth about me is that my children come first always."

*F | 28 | Ionia, MI
#Family*

The main underlying family truths were:

- **Understand the complexity and richness of my family.** Customers come as part of a wider unit and the brands they connect with need to show they understand the individual's wider context.
- **Help me reduce the challenges I face as an individual within the context of the family.**
Trusted brands are those that make life effortless and allow consumers to make time to focus on meaningful family interactions rather than day-to-day tasks. Key priorities are supporting healthy lifestyles and keeping the family unit safe. Brands that are seen to put the family at risk will be written off. Preferred brands will understand the importance of a nurturing environment and provide products and services that facilitate it.
- **Fun is fundamental to family connectedness.** All the images associated with the family theme contain people who are smiling or laughing and are engaged in activities outside the mundanity of day-to-day life. Understanding the family sense of humor and the activities they find fun or worthwhile provide strong connecting points for brand experiences. Again, products, services, and communications that connect with a fun agenda are more likely to be welcomed into the family unit.

The importance of quality is the second bedrock truth that brands need to understand. This is closely linked to family, and product quality truths are articulated through the family lens. Images place family members together with trusted products explaining that only high-quality experiences are welcomed into the family's protective circle.

Figure 6: The visual truth about product quality



"Because it's a healthy diet and I love this cereal because it's lightly toasted and fortified with 9 essential vitamins plus iron and zinc."

F | 38 | Marietta, GA
#Product/Service Quality, Safe/Healthy



"Give me exciting, high quality products and low prices or I'll "duck" your store and explore other options."

M | 53 | Beaverton, OR
#Fun, Product/Service Quality



"Customers are loyal for a reason. Brands should always maintain high standard so that I will always appreciate the brand."

M | 36 | New York, NY
#Product/Service Quality



"I believe that if you give customers quality products and superior service you will keep them. After all, money talks."

F | 46 | Columbus, OH
#Product/Service Quality

The core product-quality truths articulated were:

- **I will always ultimately judge brands on the performance of their products and services— it's where the rubber meets the road.** No amount of image management or careful messaging will make up for products that fundamentally don't deliver.
- **I vote with my feet and my wallet.** Consumers are not afraid to change allegiances. It does not matter how long brands have been in their lives; if they don't deliver on the fundamentals, consumers will defect.
- **Trust comes with consistency and delivering on exactly what you promised. Your product better do and contain exactly what it says on the container.** Products and services are tried and tested, and consistency of experience matters.

The customers' new truths

There are five new customer truths that support the bedrock truths revealed in the study. All five tell a story of a desire for empathy, support, and social responsibility that focuses on customers' wants and aspirations more than their specific needs.

The five new truths every brand needs to understand and respond to are:

I crave variety

The first new customer truth enforces concerns that the pursuit of technology and data-driven customer experiences may result in blander outcomes.

Customers want the ability to make choices between brands based on the experiences, products, and service they offer.

They also want a variety of options within individual customer experiences, including how and when they choose to interact with different tools.

Successful brands will be those that stimulate their customers to engage, make decisions, and ultimately play a role in creating and managing their own customer experiences.



"Just like with barbecue sauces, give us a variety of choices. If I can choose from several options, then I know the business cares."

*F | 38 | Marietta, GA
#Product/Service Quality,
Safe/Healthy*

Equality matters

Historically, brands were more likely to be judged on their environmental credentials and their community involvement.

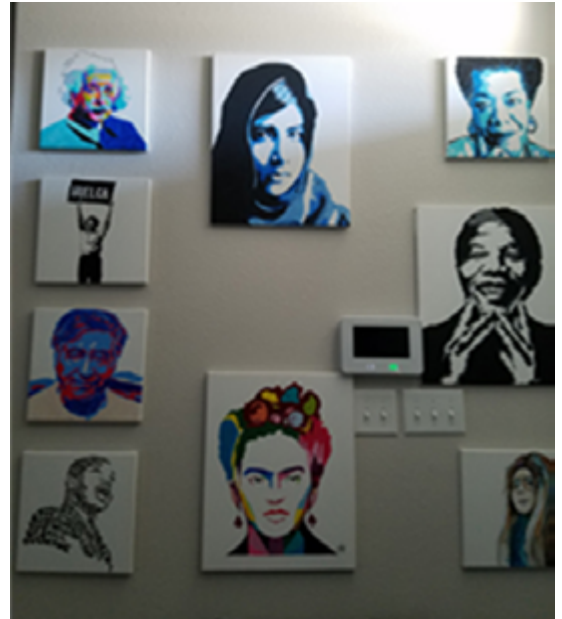
The New Truths for Brands Study shows that consumers are now focused on equality when choosing the brands they trust to be involved in their lives.

Consumers view equality in two ways:

- Ensuring equality of access to products and services
- Evidence that the brand is also striving for equality in the workplaces where the goods or service are created

Brands will be judged on their actions and their equality initiatives will be independently verified.

Brands that are known to strive for equality in their culture and customer experiences are more likely to be trusted and favored.



"Respect what so many have accomplished for us. All of our rights. Equal treatment to all."

F | 30 | Laredo, TX
#Equality

I appreciate efficiency

Efficiency is the new truth that links most strongly to the family truths discussed earlier.

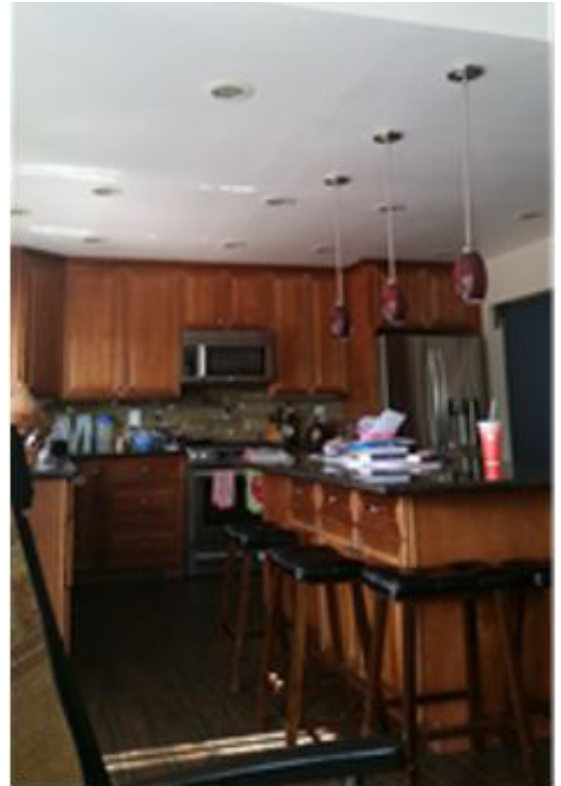
The images selected emphasized the importance of brands getting to the point in their marketing communications. Tell the story, tell it quickly, and keep it simple.

They also seek brands that deliver experiences that allow them to achieve what they need to do quickly and effortlessly. Trusted brands offer solutions that they can use to be more effective in everyday tasks (e.g., online tools, automatic payments, or saved preferences from previous experiences).

The underlying truth about efficiency is that consumers want to spend time doing things they aspire to, rather than the things they must. Brands creating effortless customer experiences that allow consumers to make space and time for more emotionally significant activities will be the brands that win consumer hearts and minds.

Feeling safe and healthy is a priority

Consumers want brands to understand that protecting their personal health and safety is a priority. They have fundamental expectations that brands are truthful about what they put in products and on packaging. They expect brands to share any concerns about ingredients and the impact those ingredients might have on them. Brands that are prepared to risk family well-being will be swiftly excluded from their lives.



"This is my truth: busy mom. I need products that help me be more efficient and organized, so I can "automate" certain aspects of life."

F | 41 | Lake Forest, CA
#Family, Efficiency, Organization



"I want to live a healthy lifestyle. Transparency in labeling on vitamin supplements and other products will help me to do so. Good quality ingredients manufactured with care and respect"

M | 45 | Madison, AL
#Safe/Healthy, Transparency

My roots matter

The final new truth is all about understanding where people come from and the values that they hold.

Consumers believe that if brands understand their heritage, they will be better equipped to create unique points of connection that resonate at the deepest level.

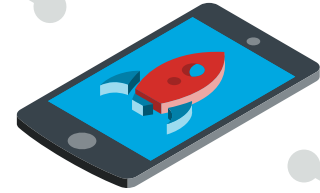
Visuals selected in the study show customers challenging brands to question their traditional assumptions (e.g., not everyone lives in a big city or near stores).

Not everyone is a happy and perfect family. Consumers trust brands that show diversity and differing realities in their advertising imagery. Ethnic, spiritual, and cultural and geographic roots matter in establishing brand relationships that will last.



"My hometown. Worth knowing if you're trying to gain my loyalty as a customer. It defines me."

*M | 54 | Newnan, GA
#Place of Origin*

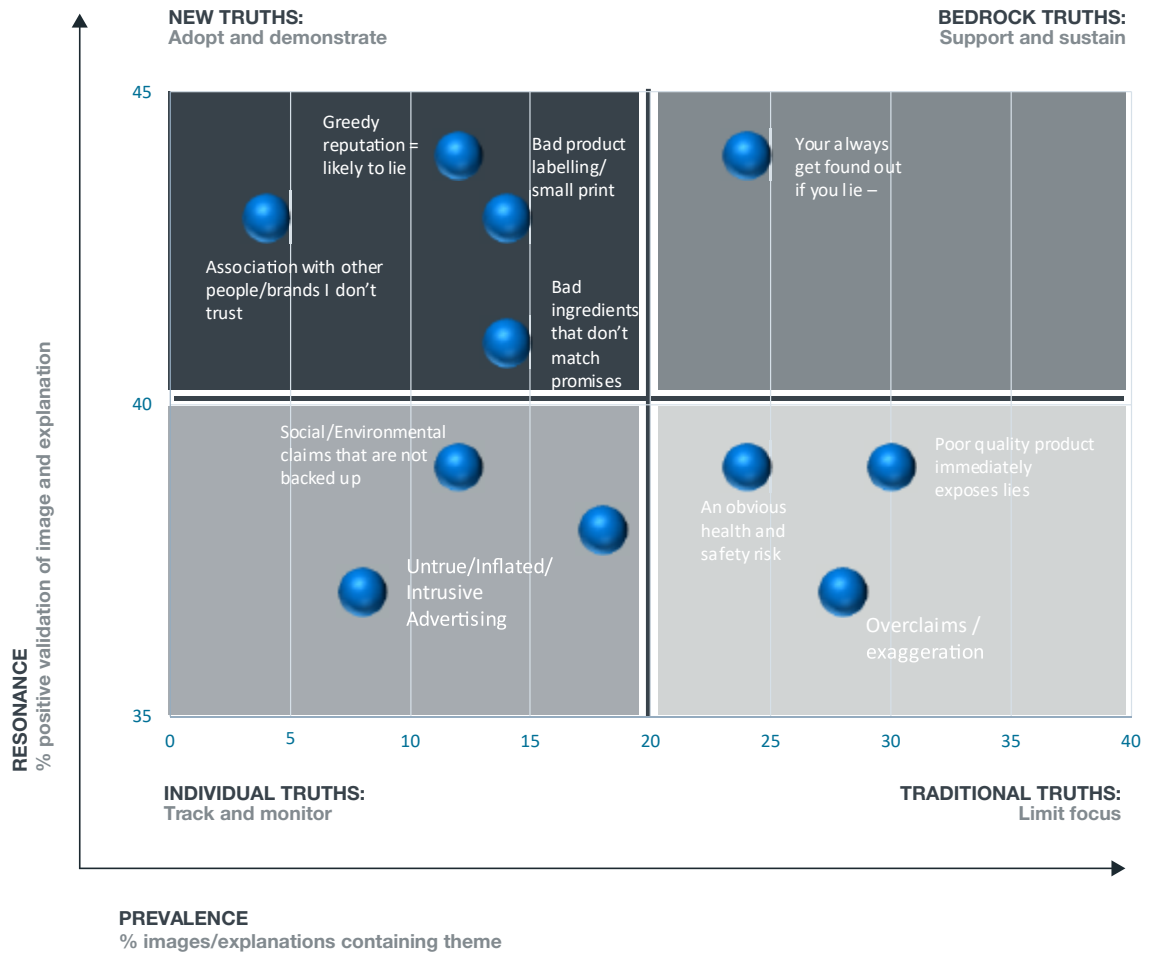


Building brand trust

The truth will always emerge

In addition to getting to the new customer truths, the New Truths for Brands Study visually and linguistically explored the burden of proof that consumers apply to brand truthfulness. The project did this through two opposite lenses: how consumers decided whether brands were truthful and when they could detect untruths in brand stories.

Figure 7: Resonance and prevalence of key truths about dishonest brands



The quadrant analysis reveals one clear and simple bedrock truth for brands: Don't bother to lie; consumers will always figure it out.

New truth is about brand interactions feeling right and creating positive emotional outcomes. Success within this new paradigm is impossible if it is built on false claims or a manufactured corporate facade.

Consumers state that they intuitively know if something feels wrong in a brand's personality or behavior. If there is any doubt that brand claims are exaggerated—that is, if products are not as they seem or marketing messages contradict the behavior of the brand's corporate entity—consumers will sense it and exclude those brands from their lives.

Figure 8: The visual truth about the inevitability of lies being uncovered



"Beauty mags like Vogue in general aren't photographically honest."

F | 32 | Yankton, SD
#Not Completely Truthful,
False Image, Lies come out



"United Airlines has continually promised customers friendly skies and they constantly are being found to provide little positive to patrons."

M | 49 | Buena Vista, NM
#Not Completely Truthful, False Image,
Lies come out



"It shows how sketchy many grocery stores can be in terms of providing factual nutritional evidence. They usually lie to promote their thing."

M | 24 | Cerritos, CA
#Product/Service Quality,
Product Labels, Lies come out



"Made a drink that attracts the kids but it is not healthy due to loads of sugar in it. Diabetes is calling the kids. Don't claim to be healthy. Don't claim to care about the community and then sell product like this."

M | 44 | Concord, CA
#Security/Health, Raw Ingredients/Materials, Lies come out

New truths on brand's burden of proof

There are four new truths about customers intuitive assessment of brand truthfulness. These represent consumers' beliefs about situations and behaviors which indicate that a brand may be dishonest.

If you appear greedy, you appear dishonest

Brands that are seen as greedy or exploitative are by default considered dishonest. This links to the importance of equality revealed in the new customer truths.

Imagery and words that tell a positive, empowering story are classified as automatically disingenuous if a brand is known to be exploitative or unfair in the way it conducts business.

Consumers believe that greedy brands will do and say anything to make maximum profit, so by default they are not considered to be truthful brands.

Bad product labeling and small print rings alarm bells

If companies are not confident enough to expose the ingredients of their products or the terms and conditions associated with their services, then they are automatically assumed to be hiding something disadvantageous to consumers.

Brands that set out information clearly—in plain English—and help people to be more informed about what they offer are more likely to build long-term relationships with consumers.

Empowering customers to make conscious and informed decisions about products and services set a strong foundation for a meaningful and sustainable connection between the brand and the individual.



"Chose picture because Nike shoes are priced out of control and makes big money but pays people in other countries nothing to mass produce. They are greedy and hypocritical."

M | 34 | Los Angeles, CA
#Greedy



"I think of peanut butter brands like Jif as not telling the truth because they contain bad ingredients like sugar and hydrogenated oils."

F | 26 | Pfafftown, NC
#Product Labels Not Completely Truthful, Security/Health

Bad ingredients that don't match claims erode trust

The consumers in the New Truths for Brands Study singled out food, beverage, and pharmaceutical brands as prime suspects for misrepresenting their products based on their raw ingredients.

The global consumer is more informed about health and wellbeing than ever before and have a fundamental understanding of what is likely to be good or bad for them. Claims to improve health, to be healthy, or to be a better lifestyle choice are subjected to the highest level of scrutiny.

This means that brands are given very little latitude for health-related claims if their ingredients are universally accepted as poor choices.

Truth and realism about ingredients dictates levels of trust in brands.



"McDonald's doesn't tell the truth. No telling what's in their food. It's not healthy and they try to pass it off as if it were. Fresh and organic is the way."

User F | 26 | Orlando, FL

#Raw Ingredients/ Materials, Not Completely Truthful

Associate with other people/brands I don't trust and I don't trust you

The New Truths for Brands Study was originally created to explore the impact on brands of distrust in the establishment. The final new truth fully validates the increasing connectivity of consumers' world views and how they assess individual brands. Brands are held accountable for the public relationships they have with others.

When brands are seen to associate with or endorse individuals or organizations that consumers dislike or distrust, the brand is classified in the same way.



"They were caught trying to track users illegally in the app store. They also associated themselves with Trump and have poor employee relations. It might be a great service but I wont use them."

M | 42 | Chicago, IL

#Scandal

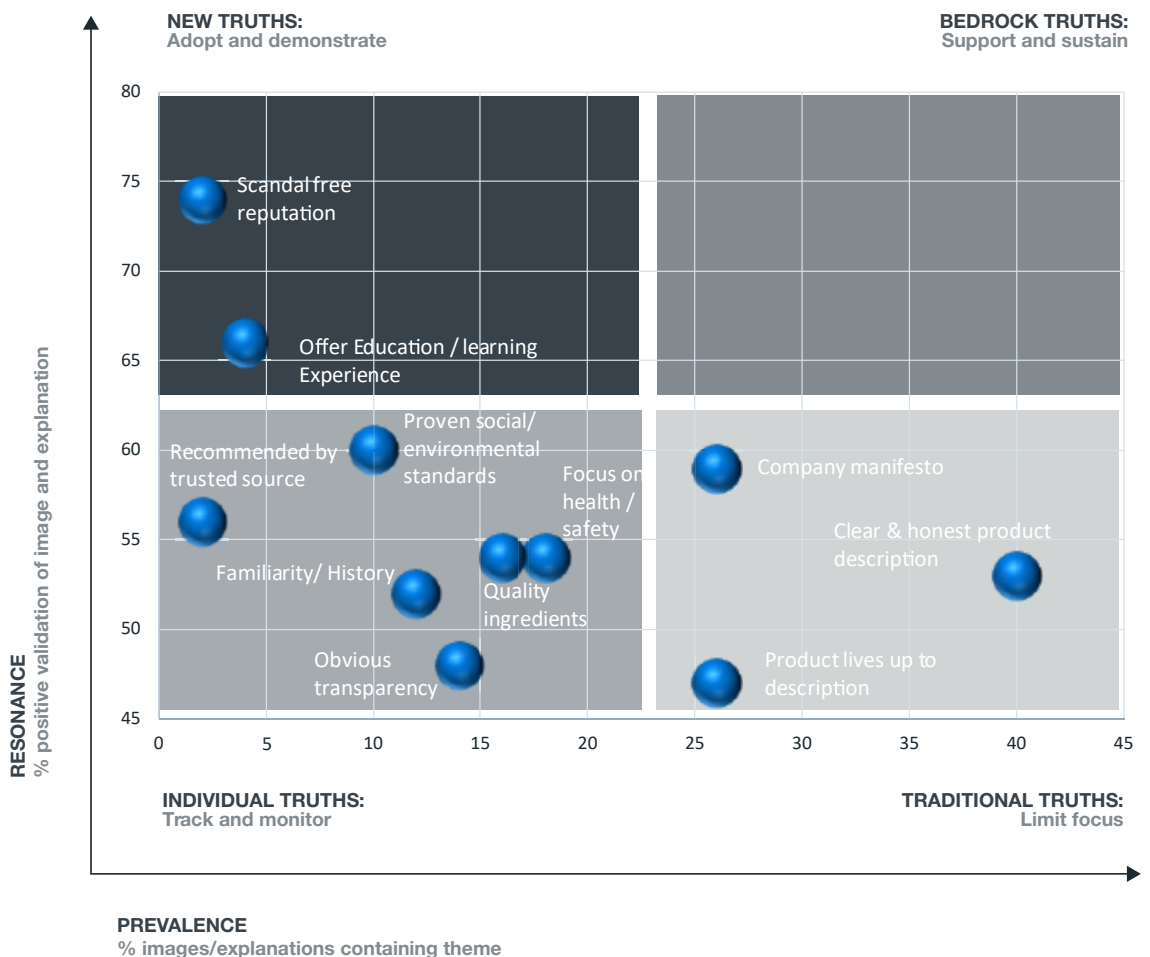
The brand markers of truth

The final question in the New Truths for Brands Study explored the markers of truth that consumers associated with brands.

Figure 9 shows an interesting phenomenon. There was no consensus about a bedrock truth. This is indicative of the current trust environment. Because there is no truth foundation to be reinforced, a new foundation needs to be set and earned.

It is also telling that while there are nine truths revealed overall, there are only two new truths that capture the imagination of the consumers involved: being scandal-free and offering an opportunity for learning.

Figure 9: Resonance and prevalence of key brand truth markers



Rebuilding trust with new truths

The distribution of the truth markers in terms of prevalence and resonance show that it will not be easy to rebuild trust in the current environment.

There is neither consensus on what is universally important (bedrock truths) nor many ideas that inspire and connect the wider audience.

This suggests that it is more important for brands to first tackle the issues that drive distrust to create a more a fertile environment to emphasize their emerging truths.

The respondents could tell many truths about themselves and rallied around commonly recognized indicators of brand untruths, but they could not identify or align on a range of tangible indicators of truth that reflect day-to-day dealings with brands.

If the new truth that most consumers agree on is that brands should avoid scandals, this suggests that there is little faith in the way that brands conduct themselves in normal business conditions.

There is no universal consensus on the ability of day-to-day brand activities to act as proof points of wider brand truth. Good products, company manifestos, and environmental promises no longer allow brands to differentiate themselves or connect with consumers. The burden of proof for claims and messages to be recognized as true is simply too high, which suggests that brands must start from scratch to rebuild a foundation of trust.

Figure 10: The visual truth about avoiding scandals

The most interesting new truth marker is an emerging one and is built on the notion that brands offering learning and educational experiences are more likely to be trusted.



"The controversy with Wells Fargo shows they are crooks and thieves. Their claims that they are reforming their customer service is obviously a load of crap."

M | 32 | Los Angeles, CA
#Scandal, Lies



"If there is a scandal I wont deal with the company again. I'm thinking of BP. They polluted the water and added cancerous waste into the ground. When you are untruthful, you are like a horse's ass."

M | 45 | Kissimmee, FL
#Scandal, Security/Health

Figure 11: The visual truth of trust through teaching

The validated images suggest that brands that demonstrate a learning mindset are more likely to be seen as open and honest. Educating customers freely about products, product ingredients, and how the brand works in the real world symbolizes brand self-confidence and good intentions.

The educational theme also extends beyond learning about the brand's universe into wider, related opportunities (e.g., an introduction into motor racing activities via car manufacturers or language learning via travel companies).

A learning focus suggests that brands are interested in people's wider context and not simply in selling them their core products or services. The outcome is greater connection and a greater likelihood to believe the brand's stories.



"Fisher because they make sure that kids are learning while playing. Brands that help you learn come across as open and contributing."

F | 34 | Lake Elsinore, CA
#Product/Service Quality, Educational



"Sesame Street tries to educate children about real world situations and they deliver. Companies that are willing to help their customers learn, feel good to buy from."

F | 63 | Freeland, MD
#Scandal

The final Truth



Rebuilding trust through behavior

The overall message from the New Truths for Brands Study is that brands need to change the way they behave and not just the messages they communicate. Rebuilding trust requires behavioral change on a number of levels. Brands must:

- Think differently about the types of data collected about customers and prospects.
- Create and act on contextual insights created by synthesizing words, numbers, and visuals to see the world as their customers truly do.
- Reflect on what is linguistically and visually resonant to audiences in everything communicated.
- Be culturally aware and sensitive in corporate behavior, content, customer experiences, and advertising practices.
- Design customer experiences that are surprising and stimulate emotional responses and memorable moments.
- Have fun and don't be afraid to show a sense of humor.
- Create differentiated experiences rather than let technology and standard models define what can be delivered.
- Employ working practices that truly support any claims made and stories told in the marketplace.
- Open up to customers to help them learn about products, ingredients, risks, and benefits that are known and proven.
- Embed commitment to equality of access in all business practices.

In summary, successful brands will be those that create and share an authentic truth about who they are, what they do, and how they do it. They will deeply understand the consumers they are there to serve and will be in open dialogue with them through data, experiences, interactions, and listening.

The ultimate truth is that brands can't talk or advertise their way back into consumers hearts and minds. Trust must be earned through transparent communication and authentic behavior.

About Metia

Metia Group is a global digital marketing agency with offices in London, Seattle, Austin, and Singapore. We employ over 130 digital marketing professionals; each is expert in a particular area of specialization.

Our clients include big corporations and ambitious businesses. We provide them with creative campaigns that reach across geographies, scale massively, can be deployed systematically, and measured relentlessly.

If you'd like to learn more about our capabilities and discuss how we could help you reach and engage your target audiences with focused, measurable campaigns, please contact us at info@metia.com.

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