

Research: Many roads lead to consumer trust

This survey by Reader's Digest was run in 14 European countries, and intended to chart consumer attitudes towards products and brands. Nokia and Nivea emerged as the big winners. In their respective product categories, they emerged as the brands that incited the greatest levels of consumer trust in all surveyed markets. This survey shows that 'high quality' and 'previous experience with the brand' are the main confidence-inspiring factors. Followed by 'understanding consumer needs', 'environmentally-friendly' and a 'good price/quality ratio' respectively. But abovementioned factors do not always hold. Consumers in Hungary and Poland, for example, are quicker to be moved by celebrity endorsements when choosing a specific diet than by factors such as 'good quality' and 'right consumer need'. Another striking outcome is that British consumers sooner take the advice of friends and family in the purchase of cleaning products, while Portuguese consumers sooner take the counsel of an expert. One final remarkable piece of information that emerged is that 'environmentally-friendly' is a particular important factor for Austrian, German and Portuguese consumers.

The survey shows that there are different ways of building consumer trust and that these differ from one country to the next. It is therefore important to consider where a brand is active, and also what type of product is offered. Unfortunately, Reader's Digest does not come up with a specific way of winning the trust of Dutch consumers. However, using Hofstede's five dimensions we can still hazard a suggestion. One of the conclusions from Hofstede's research is that Dutch consumers have a dislike for power and authority ('power distance'). Based on that information, you can assume that brands that manage to tailor to those feelings will win consumers' trust. One classic example is the Postbank's '15 million people' advert from 1996, complete with song of the same name, written and performed by Fluitsma & Van Tijn, which contains the following lines: 'Country averse to patronizing – Uniforms are never sacred – A son calls his dad Pete – Bikes are stolen from anywhere'. But there are also the Albert Heijn supermarkets ads, in which store employee Rachid sometimes ridicules his boss in a playful manner, which probably helps build consumer trust in the Albert Heijn brand.

Reference(s)

Readers Digest European Trusted Brands Survey (2006). www.rdtrustedbrands

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