Top 10 *Findings*

01 The "me" and the "we." Purpose has evolved to encompass both societal and personal

Consumers want brands to play many roles in their lives – especially as a stabilizing force. Sixty-eight percent say it's very important that brands help them feel safe, confident, and inspired. People look to brands for optimism (62%), purpose-driven action (61%), and education (59%).

02 Brands are more trusted than traditional institutions

Eighty percent of people trust the brands they use to do what is right, more than traditional institutions, including My Employer (79%). Brands are filling the void that institutions – government (54%), media (55%), NGOs (60%), and business (65%) – have left behind, and appealing to the idea that trust is local.

03 Brands have earned trust from those with both low- and high-income levels

Since 2022, trust in brands in general has risen sharply to 68%, while trust in institutions has remained flat at a trust index of 55. Notably, this trend is consistent among income levels, signaling a shift in where people place their confidence.

04 Silence is not an option

Among consumers who say a brand is obligated to address at least one societal issue, over half say they would buy less or lose trust in a brand that ignores its obligation to address societal issues. The impact is especially strong among older generations, with 60% of those aged 61+ saying they'd cut back on purchases.

05 Consumer expectations define brand obligations

People believe brands are obligated to act on societal issues when the brand has a history of doing so, or addressing the problem can positively impact customers, employees, the community, or even the brand itself. The more ties a brand has to an issue, the more its obligation to act grows.

06 Homegrown brands win trust

Across global markets, trust in domestically headquartered brands outpaces foreign counterparts by an average of 15 points. Germany and Canada show gaps of 30 and 29 points respectively. Consumers are looking inward for familiarity and stability.

07 Expectations of an Active Brand are set by the category

While sectors like health and technology are most expected to provide optimism, education, and well-being, categories like food and fashion are leaned on to simply "make me feel good." Across the board, people want brands that make them feel good, offer hope, teach them something, connect them to others, and help them do good.

08 Cultural relevance drives brand trust

Seventy-three percent of people say their trust in a brand would increase if it authentically reflected today's culture. Similar sentiment is seen across age groups and political views. Only 27% say their trust in a brand would increase when it ignores culture and focuses solely on products, demonstrating that cultural connection is key to credibility.

09 Brands need to move from SEO to GEO

Among the 55% who use generative AI platforms, 91% say they use them for shopping in some way, including researching brands, comparing products, and summarizing reviews. What shows up in AI is shaped by reputation, relevance, credibility, and clarity – it's fueled by earned.

10 Brand activism faces a complicated landscape

Consumers are more likely to buy from brands that act on issues like clean air (60%) and climate change (55%). Politically, the left (66%) and right (60%) share wide support for brands that ensure clean air and water in local communities. On all other issues, left-leaning consumers are more likely to buy from brands that support cultural issues than right-leaning consumers.

To learn more about the Edelman Trust Barometer, visit https://www.edelman.com/trust/2025/trust-barometer #TrustBarometer

All data is based on general population sample unless otherwise noted.

Edelman | 25 YEARS Edelman Trust Barometer