

# How Brands Can Maintain Trust with Canada Consumers During a Crisis

Edelman's latest survey of consumers in Canada highlights takeaways for brands during and after COVID-19

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**T**he actions of brands during a crisis can make or break long-term relationships with consumers, according to the "2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust and the Coronavirus."

Nearly three-quarters (71%) of consumer respondents in Canada said brands that prioritized profits over people would lose their trust forever. Similarly, almost two-thirds (65%) agreed that how well a brand responds in a crisis will have a huge impact on their likelihood of buying that brand in the future. More than a quarter (26%) said they started using a new brand based on its actions during COVID-19.

## Attitudes Toward Brands During the Coronavirus Pandemic Among Adults in Canada vs. Worldwide, March 2020

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: Edelman, "2020 Edelman Trust Barometer 2020 Special Report: Brand Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic," April 24, 2020

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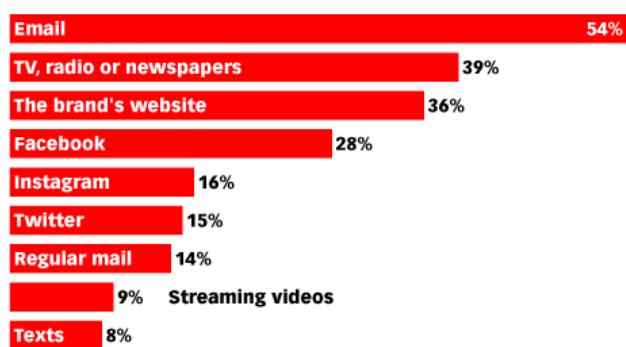
Several agency executives emphasized the heightened scrutiny on brand messaging during the pandemic. "Brands should be conscious of the purpose and the value of offers during this time," said Caroline Moul, president of PHD Canada. "Consumers want to know that a brand stands for something. They don't want a brand to be opportunistic."

Dustin Rideout, chief strategy officer at Juniper Park\TBWA, said that brands "need to consider not just how to participate with a message during this time, but how to communicate coming out of the crisis. In a response period, which is what we're in at the moment, brands should aim to provide clarity and utility—that's what people need."

When Edelman asked adults in Canada how they preferred to hear from brands about their COVID-19 response, email topped the list at 54%, presumably because it indicates an opt-in to brand communications. Traditional media formats—TV, radio and newspapers—ranked second at 39%, followed by a brand's website (36%). Social media, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, trailed more conventional media.

## What Methods Would Adults in Canada Prefer Brands to Use When Communicating About the Coronavirus and Their Response to the Pandemic?

% of respondents, March 2020



Note: ages 18+

Source: Edelman, "2020 Edelman Trust Barometer 2020 Special Report: Brand Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic," April 24, 2020

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Some brands may have to rethink entire campaigns to avoid seeming insensitive or out of touch with the current reality. "We had to point out to a brand recently that the campaign they had in market just didn't play well right now," said Shawn Lowe, vice president of growth and partnerships at Halifax-based Time + Space Media. "It could have offended some Canadians. We made recommendations to reevaluate their creative."

One large toy manufacturer scrapped its existing spring campaign on TV and digital video that was specific to toys for March break and outdoor activities. "With COVID-19, they canceled the planned campaign and pivoted to support retailers," said Fil Lourenco, vice president of digital at Havas Media Canada. "As a manufacturer, they don't have an ecommerce presence, so we adjusted strategy to drive directly to retailers. We also adjusted the product mix to be more reflective of what parents are looking for now — family games, puzzles and educational."

Other key findings from the Edelman trust study included:

- 93% of respondents in Canada expected brands to partner with government and relief agencies to address the crisis.
- 89% wanted to hear how brands support and protect their employees and customers.

- 91% believed that brands should shift to producing products that help meet current challenges.

Where feasible, brands are retooling to make goods that are in high demand during the pandemic. This includes distilleries across the country that are making hand sanitizers and textile manufacturers that are producing personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers.

“A help message is not wrong, but it’s better backed up with evidence of the assistance you are providing,” Rideout said. “Is what you're doing essential? Essential over assistance, at least right now in this phase that we're in, will pay dividends later on.”