



**MUCK
RACK**

INSIDE MODERN PR: TRUST, TIMING & BUILDING CREDIBILITY

**A Deep Dive Into
Earned Attention in
2025**



ABOUT THE RESEARCH:



The world of public relations is undergoing a rapid transformation. From the rise of AI-powered tools to the fragmentation of media and an insatiable demand for radical authenticity, the rules of the game have changed. This research explores how successful brands and leaders are moving beyond traditional media relations to build credibility and influence in a hyper-connected world.

OUR METHODOLOGY:



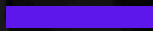
Ipsos conducted a quantitative online survey among 1,000 consumers representative of the General Population, and 92 senior-level marketing leaders (Marketers) in the US to identify news consumption and credentialing, as well as what brands can do to build trust in their comms.

“Marketers”: Brand Marketers/Managers/Strategy, Ad Agency, Media Agency Professionals





**LEGACY MEDIA
DELIVERS
CREDIBILITY, BUT
ATTENTION LIVES
ON SOCIAL**



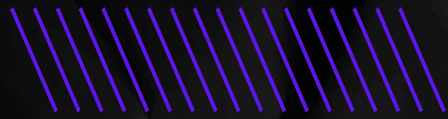


LEGACY MEDIA HAS SPENT DECADES BUILDING LEGITIMACY...



...and that trust remains a lasting anchor even as modern sources emerge.

57% of consumers say local news is their most trusted source, and 44% still turn to legacy media as their anchor.



AT THE SAME TIME, SOCIAL PLATFORMS DOMINATE THE NEWS DIET.

85% of 18–34 year olds and 67% of 35–54 year olds now get their news from social platforms.

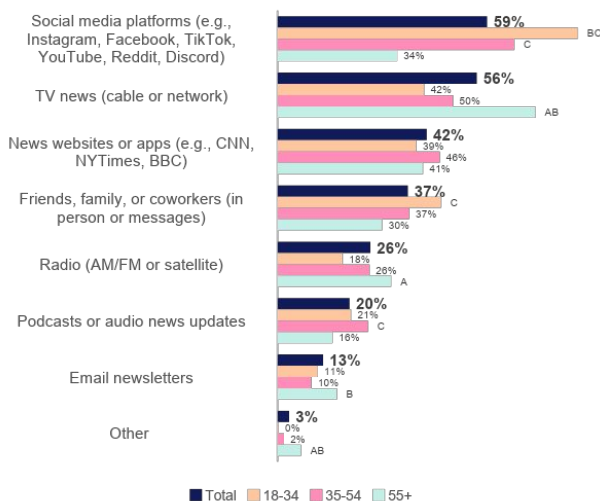
For sheer reach and cultural impact, social rules the day.

WHAT THIS MEANS

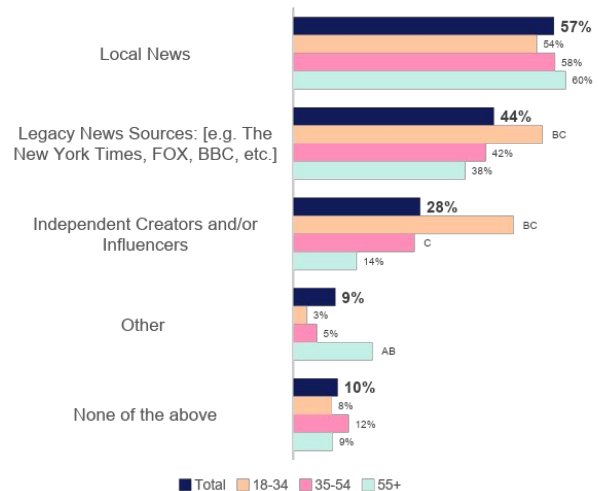


Modern PR must master the **art of fusion** – leveraging social for scale and immediacy, while leaning on the trust signals of legacy media to anchor credibility. It's not a trade-off; it's a balance.

Social media is an important news platform, especially when reaching those under 55. However, traditional TV news outlets and websites are still key platforms for all ages to get their news as well.



Traditional news sources like local and legacy news are the most trusted across all age groups. Despite more use of social platforms for news, those 18-34 still trust legacy news sources as well as independent creators.





HOW TO CURATE CREDIBILITY ON SOCIAL





1. FOCUS ON PROOF AND RESONANCE

Tactical Elements in Trust:

<u>What Consumers Value Most</u>	<u>Marketers' Expectations of what Consumers value most</u>
1. Fact-checked information with clear data	1. Visual Proof (photos, video, documents)
2. Transparency about sources (clear citations, named sources)	2. Fact-checked information with clear data
3. Unbiased or balanced reporting	3. High production quality (clear visuals, professional format)

People aren't easily fooled by polish. **Their top trust signal is fact-checked information with clear data, followed by transparency of sources and balanced reporting.** Yet the brand leaders we spoke to believe **visual proof (photos, videos, documents)** is most valued, ranking it twice as highly as clear data.

That gap matters. With AI and manipulated imagery on the rise, visuals alone are no longer the shortcut to trust they once were. This creates a clear opening for brand leaders: elevate functional proof (fact-checked data, transparent sourcing) while still harnessing visuals to amplify and simplify that proof.

Continued...

1. FOCUS ON PROOF AND RESONANCE

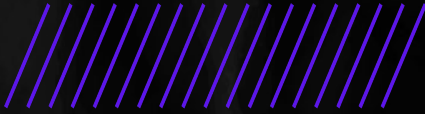
Emotional Signals of Trust	
<u>What Consumers Value Most</u>	<u>Marketers' Expectations of what Consumers value most</u>
1. Matches my gut instinct	1. A person they trust already agrees with it
2. A person I already trust agrees with it	2. Recommendations from friends/family
3. It feels emotionally honest (tone, delivery)	3. It feels emotionally honest (tone, delivery)

Yet the pursuit of trust isn't only about facts; it's also about feeling. **When we look at emotional signals, people don't offer a single silver bullet. Instead, they prioritize messages that "match [their] gut instinct" and come from "a person [they] already trust agrees with it."**

Brand leaders recognize some of this, ranking trusted recommendations and emotional tone highly. But the nuance is lost, and **familiarity alone doesn't cut it. Consumers gravitate toward messages that feel honest and speak to them instinctively.**

IN A NUTSHELL:

Credibility is multifaceted – it requires **proof and resonance**. The real opportunity lies in delivering the deeper validation and consistency that today's consumers are looking for.





2. MAKE YOUR STORY EASILY VERIFIABLE

Today's audiences are buried in click bait and sensationalized headlines, but when something feels off, they don't hesitate to fact-check. When confronted with a news story that feels questionable, **44% of consumers say their first instinct is to fact-check on their own.** And the biggest credibility red flag? **A lack of clear evidence, data, or sources** — flagged by **65%** of respondents.

The bottom line: social media users are deliberate about who they trust. Skepticism is second nature, and fact-checking has never been easier.

IN A NUTSHELL:

The consumer has become the final arbiter of truth. Their self-service verification highlights why "providing clear, simple facts and data" is an essential part of building brand trust today.





3. CONSISTENCY IS CURRENCY



Brand leaders know consistency matters: **90% agree brands need a steady presence outside of crisis moments.** But the execution falls short – only **29% strongly agree their brand's voice is consistently authentic and human.**

Consumers notice. They reward brands with **a consistent, positive reputation over time (25%)** more than those that can simply respond **rapidly to a crisis (14%).**


While speed is valued in the moment, without sustained authenticity it risks feeling performative.

IN A NUTSHELL:

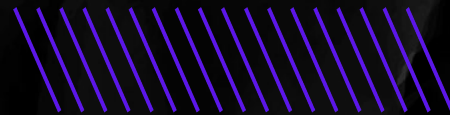
Without investing in an **organic social presence**, brands are leaving attention untapped.



CONSISTENCY BANKS EQUITY THAT SPEED ALONE CANNOT BUY.



SUMMARY



Today's consumers want evidence, resonance, and authenticity, all delivered with the immediacy of social and the rigor of legacy media. That's why PR must evolve. VaynerMedia's **vxPR** was built for this modern mandate:

- We engineer stories that fuse **legacy media's authority** with **social's scale and speed.**
- We move beyond vanity plays to deliver **cultural relevance, functional proof, and transparency.**
- We create with **consistency,** ensuring brands show up authentically long before a crisis hits.

This is how to build credibility and influence in today's hyper-connected world.

SOURCE 1: IPSOS OMNIBUS ONLINE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY, N1,000 US ADULTS AGE 18-65 NATIONAL REP
SAMPLE

SOURCE 2: IPSOS COMMUNITIES ONLINE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY OF N92 US BRAND MARKETING,
INSIGHTS, AD & MEDIA BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

Field dates:

9/15-24/2025

Thanks For Reading.

Let's Chat 😊



Wanda Pogue
Chief Strategy Officer &
Post Creative Strategist
VaynerMedia



Rachele Testa Schaefer
VP Global Communications
VaynerX



Linda Zebian
VP Communications
Muck Rack



Lisa Zielinski
SVP, Creative Excellence
Ipsos



Jamie Stenziano
EVP, Tech/Media Sector
Ipsos





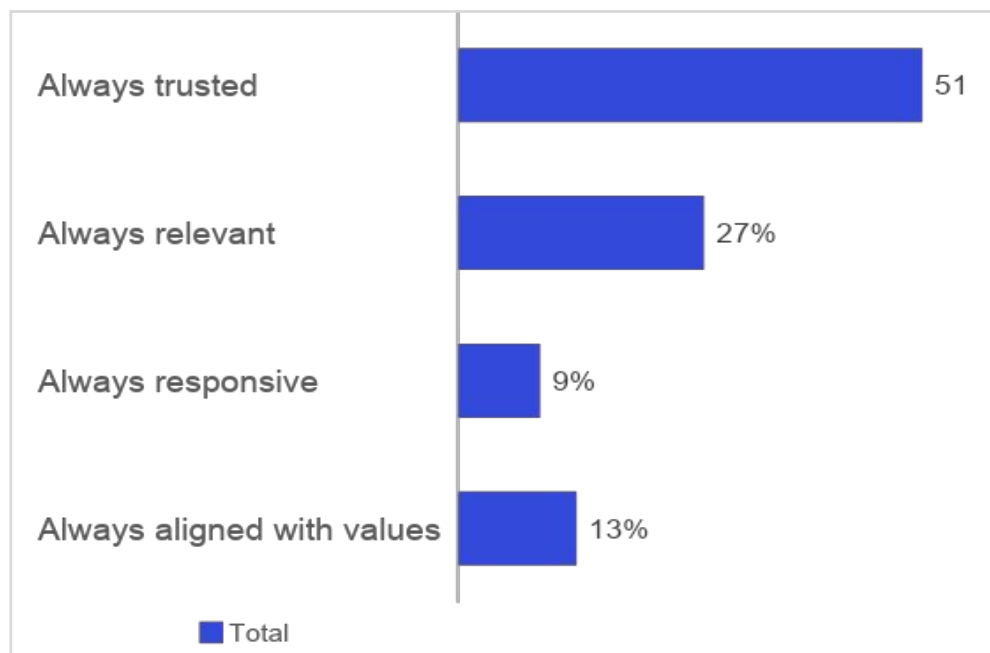
Appendix Full Results:

**DETAILED RESULTS:
IPSOS SURVEY OF
1,000 CONSUMERS &
92 MARKETERS**

Detailed Results:

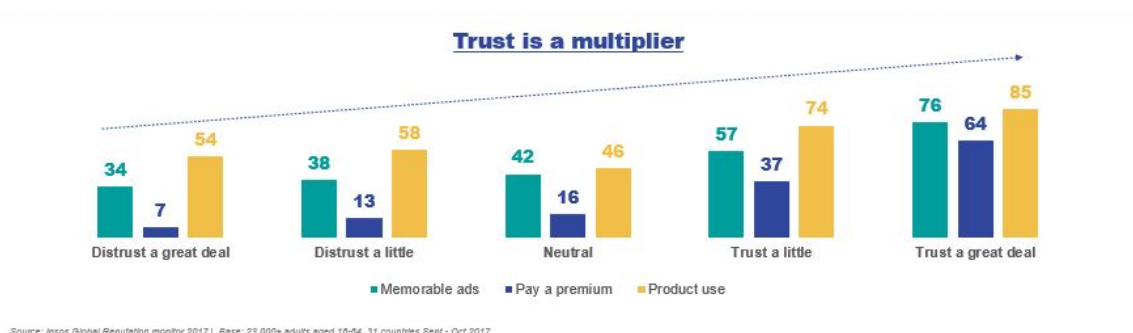
Trust is the top thing marketers want their brand to be known for.

If you could guarantee only one thing about how your brand is perceived in the next 2 years, what would it be?



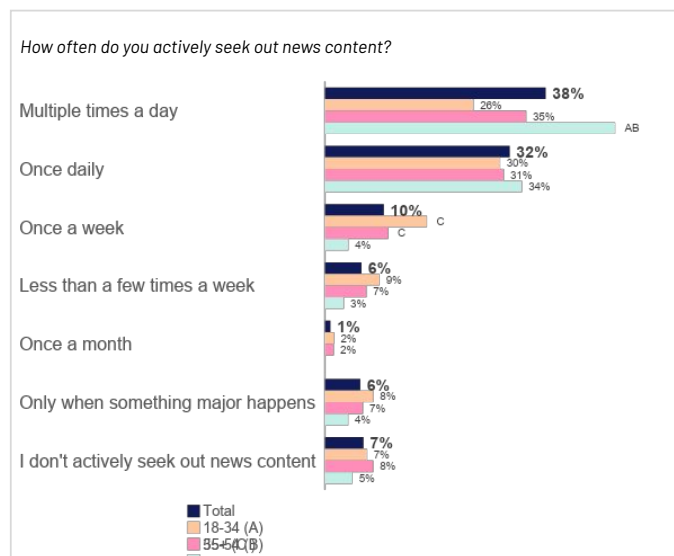
N=92 Marketers

Ipsos' data shows that trust is a multiplier, having a positive impact on product usage, willingness to pay a premium, and even the memorability of comms.

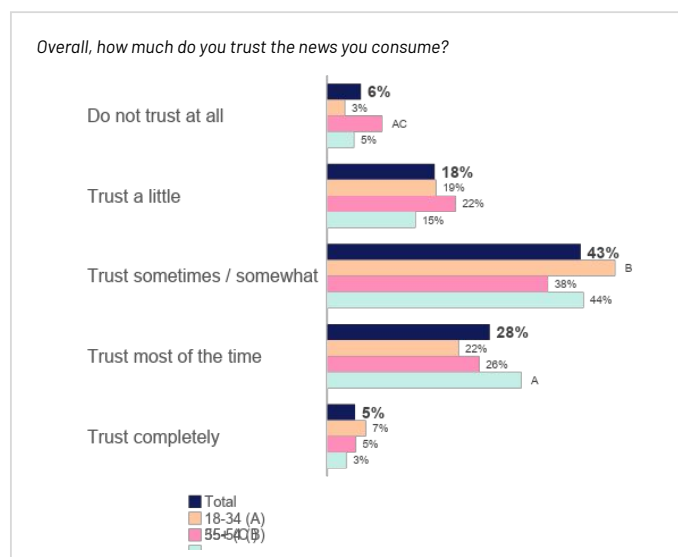


Detailed Results:

Majority of consumers are consuming media daily or multiple times a day (70%). Boomers are the most frequent seekers of news (50% seeking out multiple times a day)



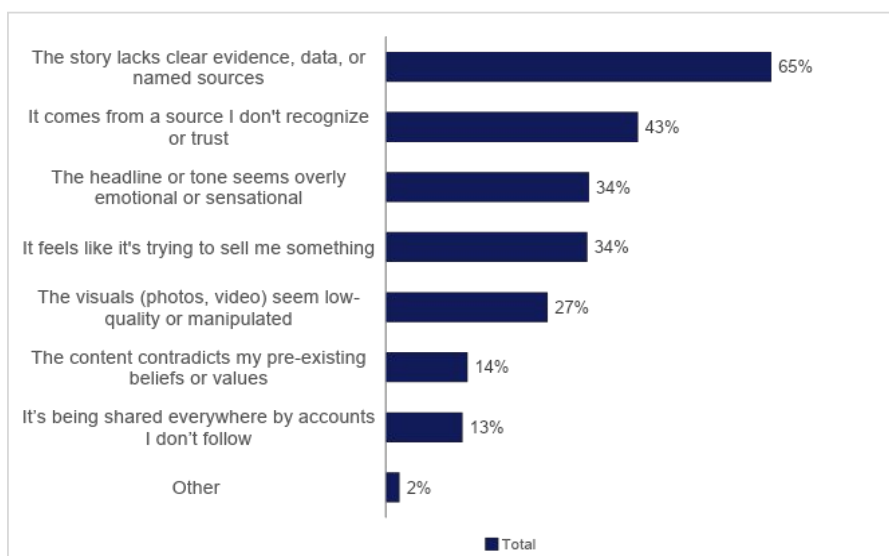
Very few trust their news sources completely.



Detailed Results:

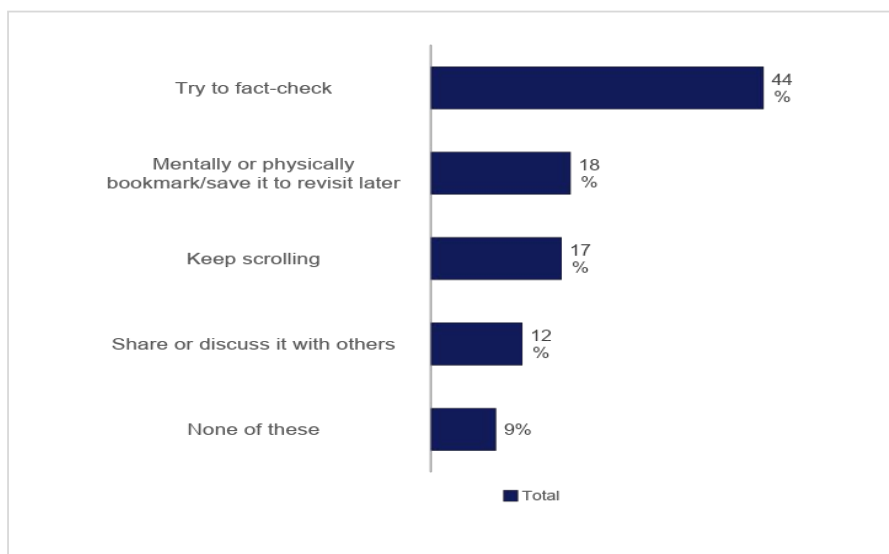
Credibility is mostly driven by clarity of information/evidence given but also by familiarity and trust in the source itself.

When reading a news story, which of the following makes you question its credibility?



If a source's credibility is questioned, then consumers will utilize other sources to fact check themselves.

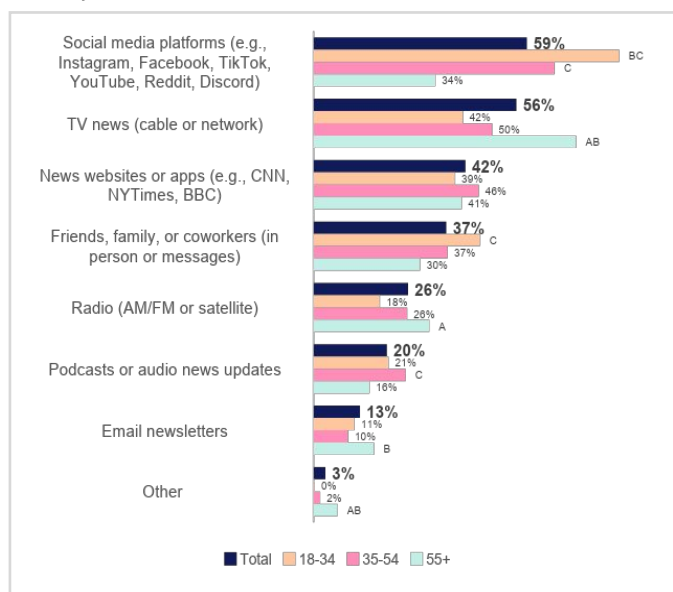
When you come across a news story online that feels believable but you haven't verified it yet, what are you most likely to do first?



Detailed Results:

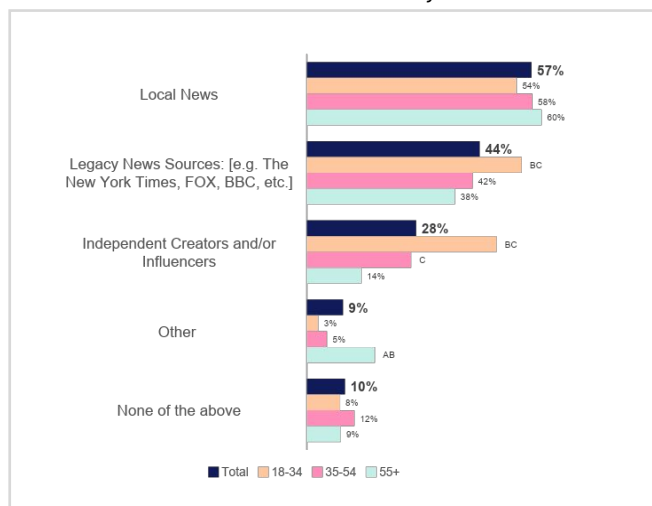
Social media is an important news platform, especially when reaching those under 55. However, traditional TV news outlets and websites are still key platforms for all ages to get their news as well.

When you do hear the news, what sources does it come from?



Traditional news sources like local and legacy news are the most trusted across all age groups. Despite more use of social platforms for news, those 18-34 still trust legacy news sources as well as independent creators.

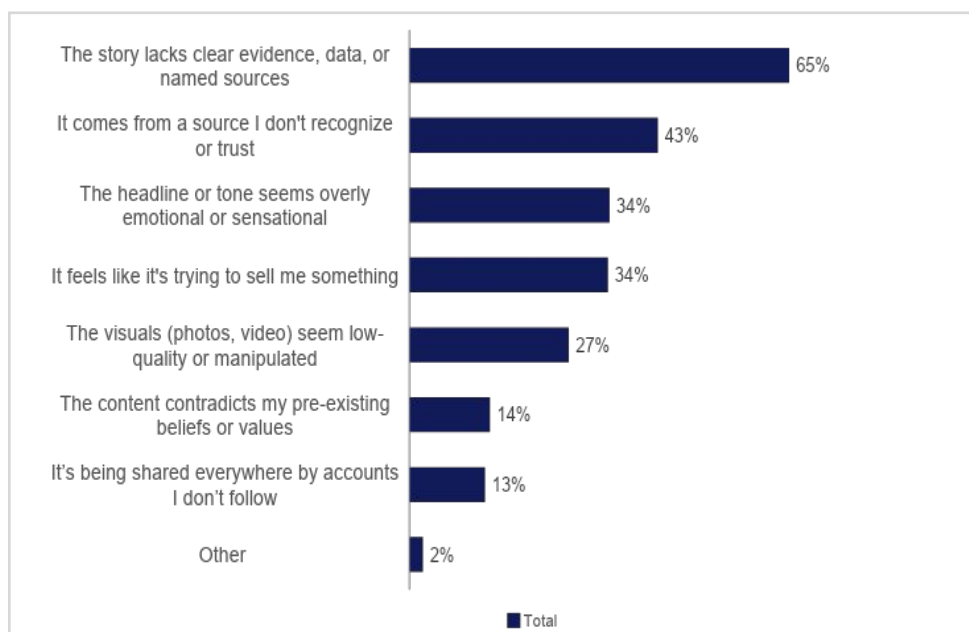
Which news sources and creators do you trust most? (Select up to 3)



Detailed Results:

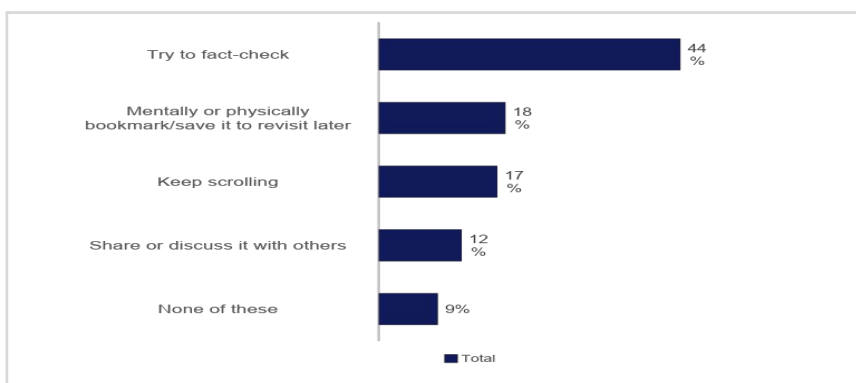
Credibility is mostly driven by clarity of information/evidence given but also by familiarity and trust in the source itself.

When reading a news story, which of the following makes you question its credibility?



If a source's credibility is questioned, then consumers will utilize other sources to fact check themselves.

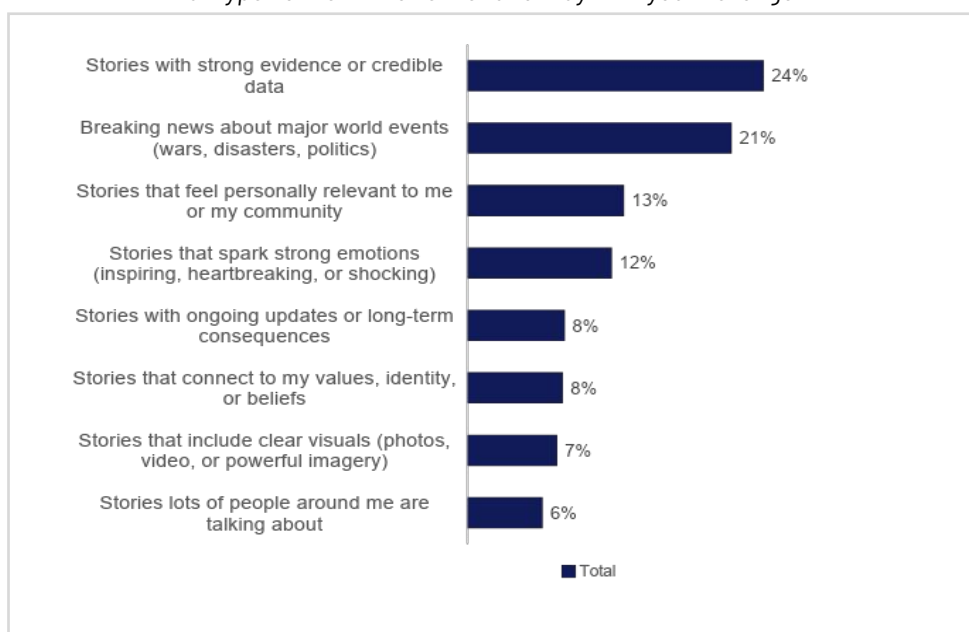
When you come across a news story online that feels believable but you haven't verified it yet, what are you most likely to do first?



Detailed Results:

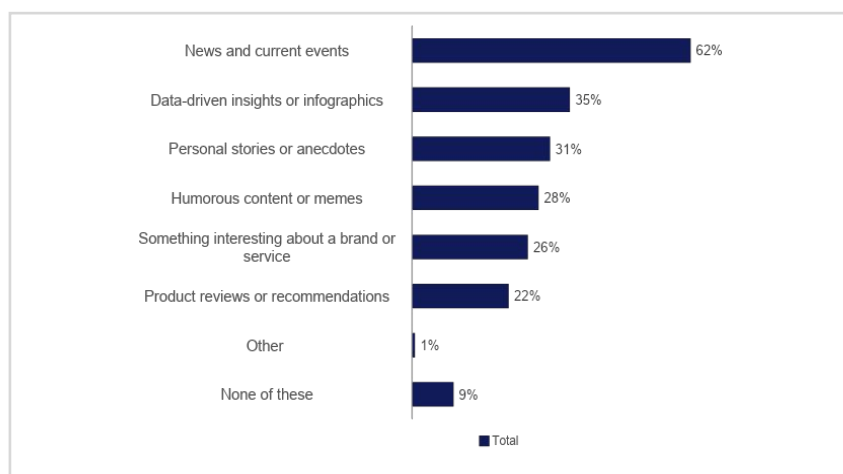
Tactics for what makes news memorable are mixed, with credible evidence and breaking news being what consumers say tend to stick with them the most.

What types of news stories tend to stay with you the longest?



Current news and data-driven insights are also the most likely to get engagement from consumers.

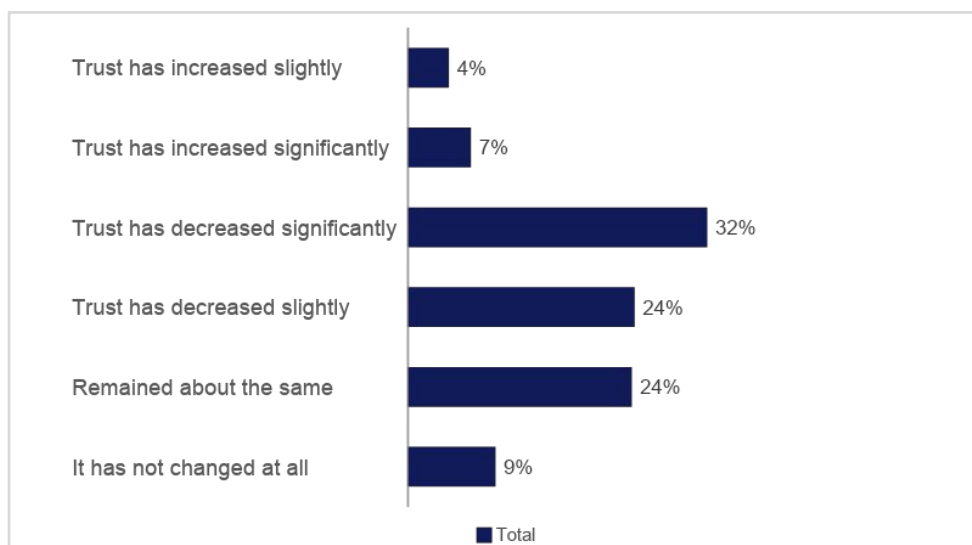
Which of the following content types are you most likely to engage with when consuming news (e.g., reshare, comment, like, save, or click through)?



Detailed Results:

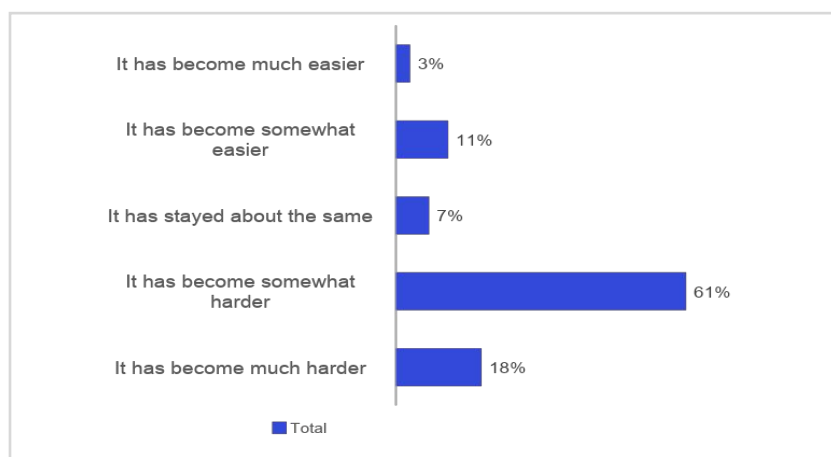
Consumers acknowledge their trust of news sources is on the decline recently – and Marketers agree it's become more difficult to build trust with consumers.

Has your trust in news sources changed over the past five years? If so, how?



N=1,000 Gen Pop Consumers

In the last five years, how has building trust with consumers changed?



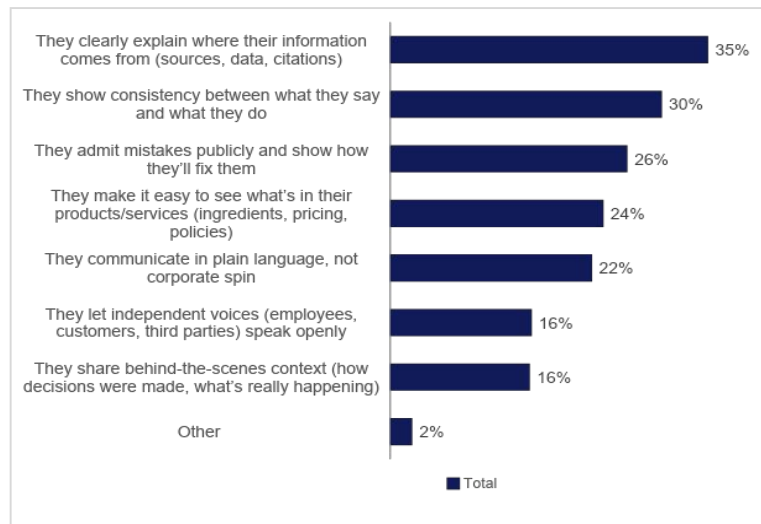
N=92 Marketers

N=1,000 Gen Pop Consumers

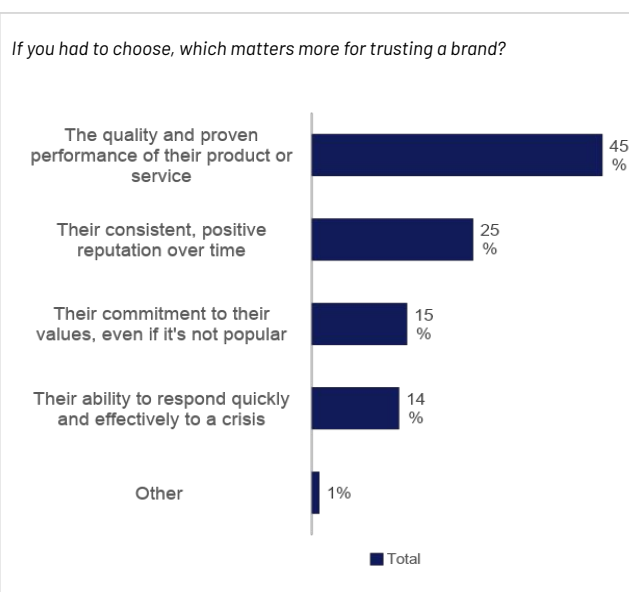
Detailed Results:

Consumers feel that transparency is largely comes from functional elements like information clarity, but consistency is also a key factor.

When a brand says it's "transparent," what does that actually mean to you?



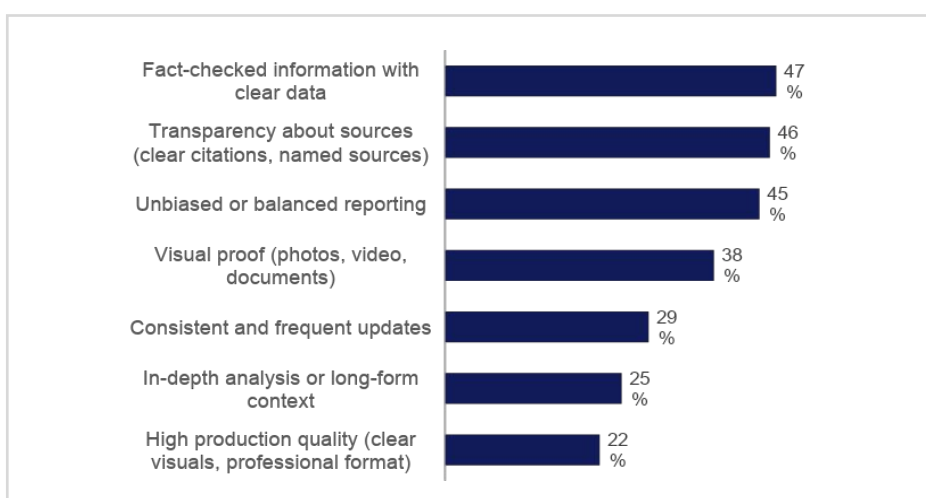
Again, the functional elements of providing a high-quality product/service is table stakes, but maintaining a consistent, positive reputation is also a key aspect of trust.



Detailed Results:

Consumers default to tactical fact-based tactics of credentialing – showing that this is a table stakes hurdle brands need to address when building trust with audiences.

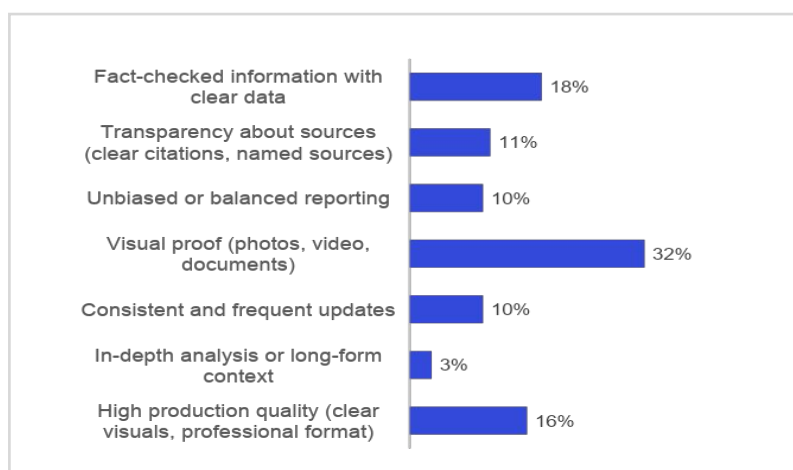
*How important are each of the following in making you believe a piece of news is true and the source behind it is credible.
(5 pt agreement scale: TB Strongly Agree %)*



N=1,000 Gen Pop Consumers

Markets place more value on visual proof and production value, which are supporting elements after meeting consumers' basic needs of trust.

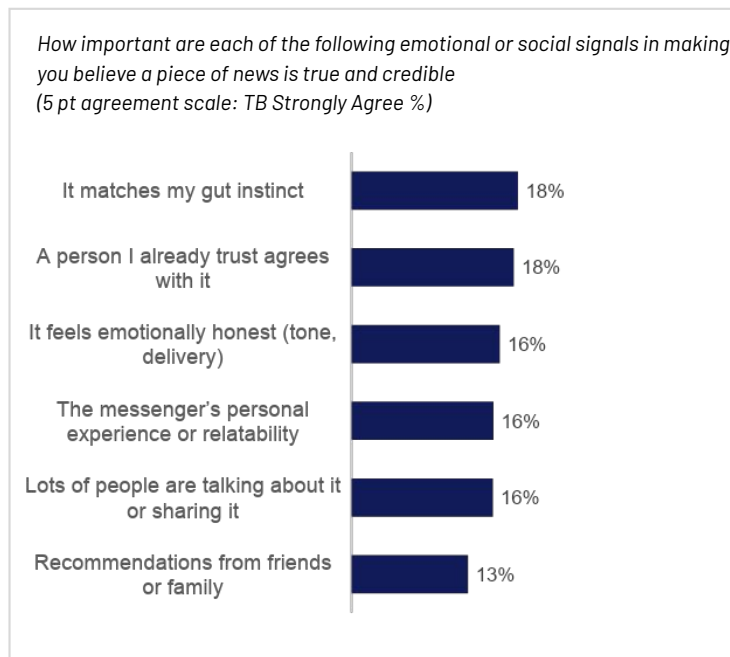
Which tactical credibility signal do you think audiences value most? (Select one)



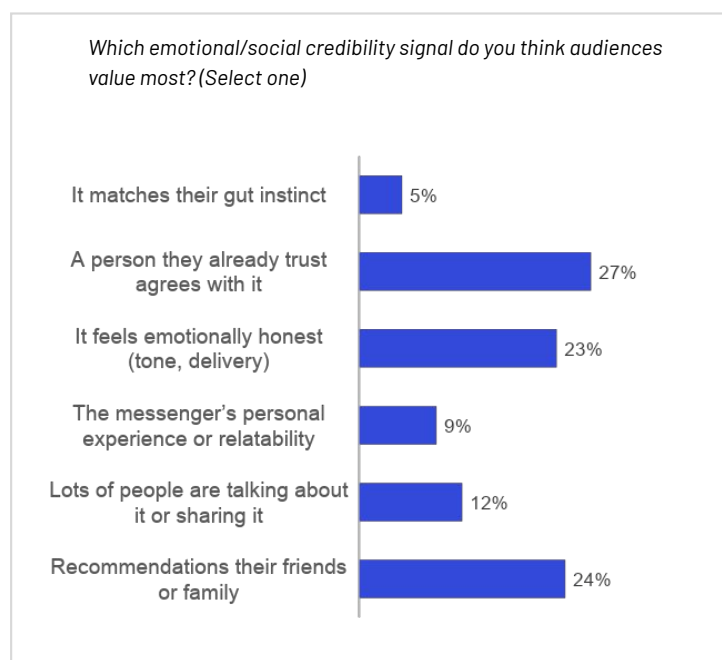
N=92 Marketers

Detailed Results:

Consumers don't feel there is a silver bullet in how to emotionally signal trust, showing a need for Marketers to balance a variety of factors including the source and tone.



N=1,000 Gen Pop Consumers

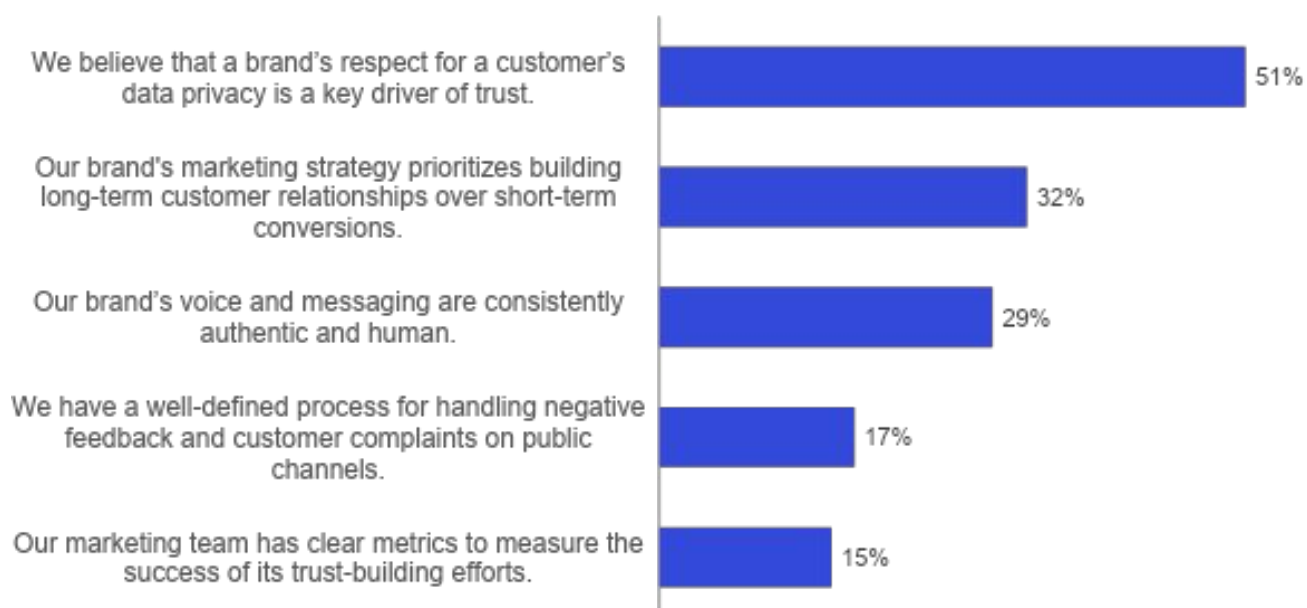


N=92 Marketers

Detailed Results:

Marketers don't feel like they're currently delivering on key elements of trust building – like having a consistently authentic voice.

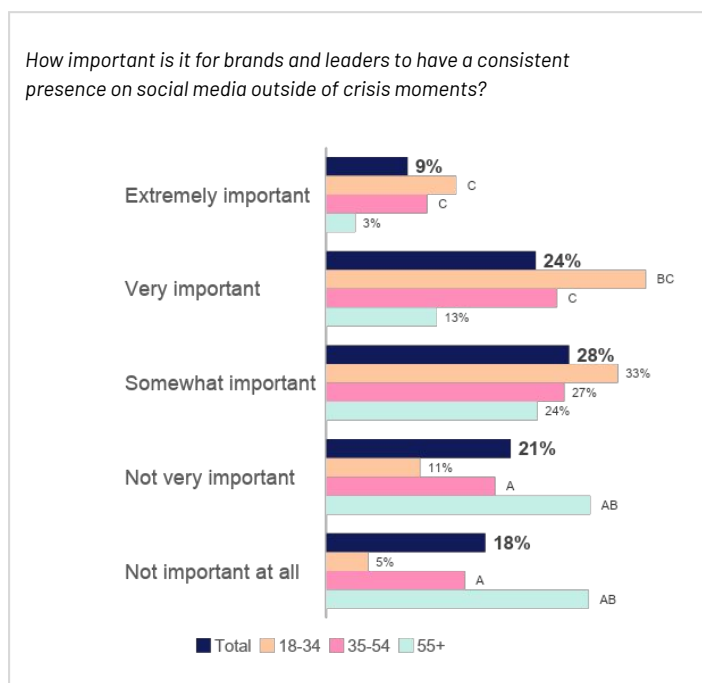
Please rate your agreement with the following statements (TB% Strongly Agree)



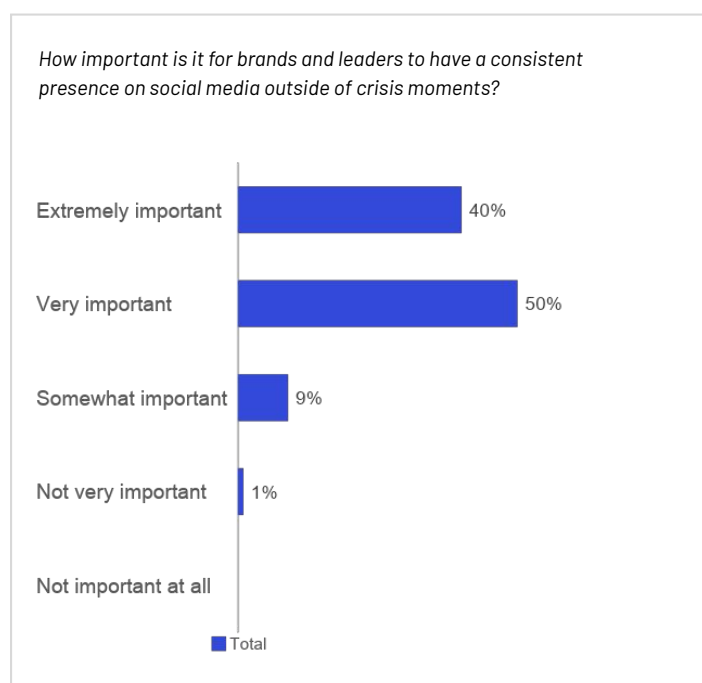
N=92 Marketers

Detailed Results:

Marketers and Consumers agree that brands need to have a consistent presence on social media outside of just crisis moments.



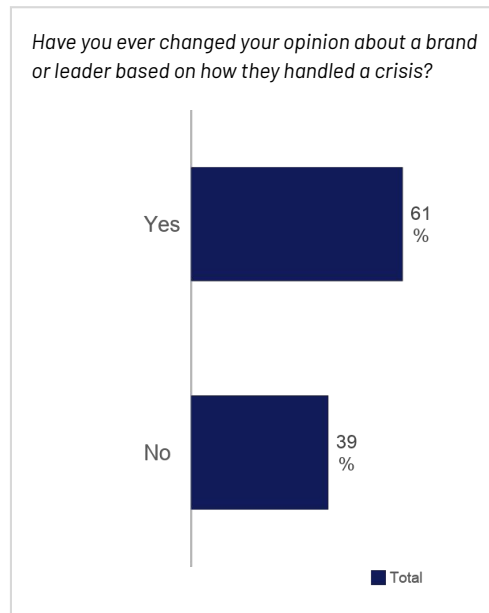
N=1,000 Gen Pop Consumers



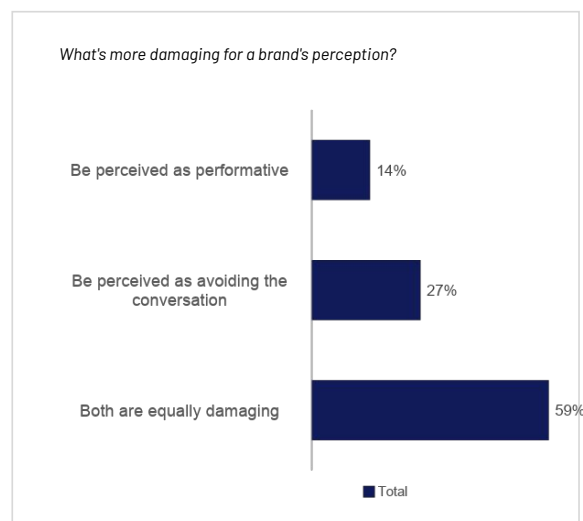
N=92 Marketers

Detailed Results:

Crisis communication is still a key element of PR as majority of consumers admit they've changed their opinion of a brand because of how they handled a crisis.

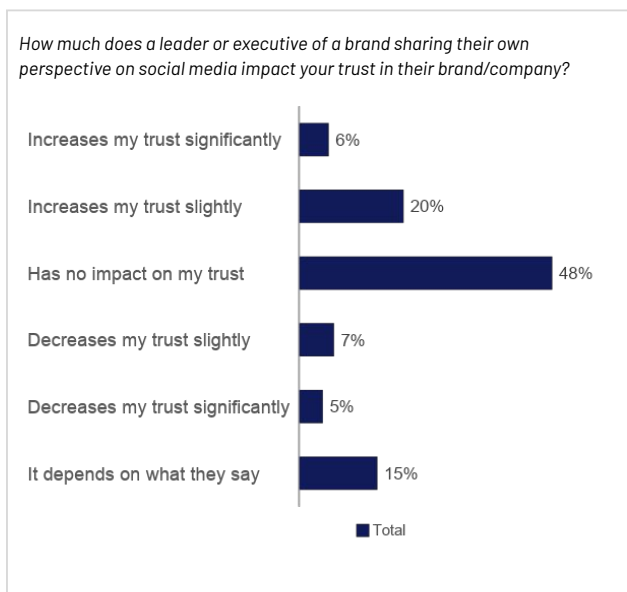


There is a fine line to walk to not be seen as too performative or avoidant – as consumers believe both can be equally damaging to brands.

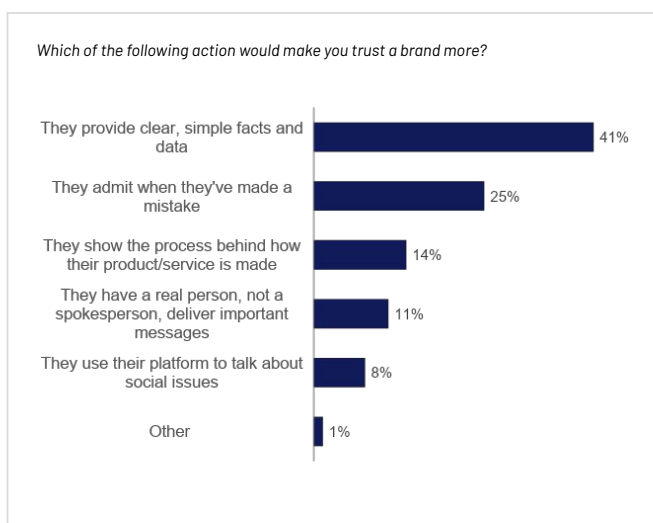


Detailed Results:

Brand's communications need to go beyond just the executive sharing their own perspectives, as nearly half of consumers feel this does not impact their trust.

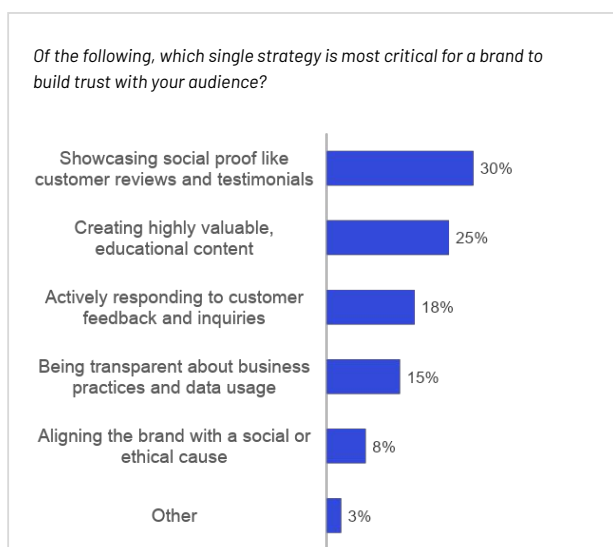


Functional tactics like providing clear and simple facts are consumers' top way that brands can build trust, with accountability another important facet – especially for younger generations.



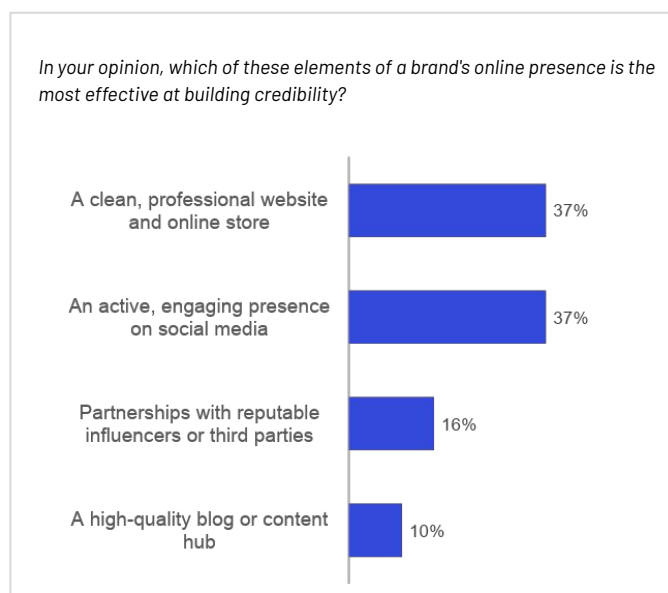
Detailed Results:

Tactics for building trust likely depend on the industry the brand plays in, but social proof and sharing valuable information are what Marketers agree are most critical.



N=92 Marketers

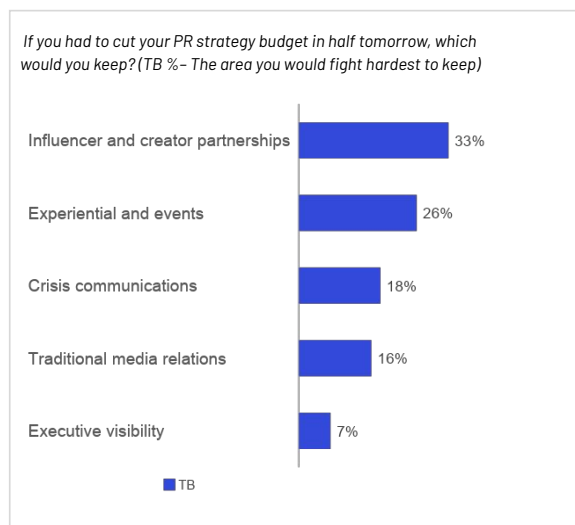
Marketers also agree that an active, engaging presence on social as well as a clean/professional online experience are also key trust building factors.



N=92 Marketers

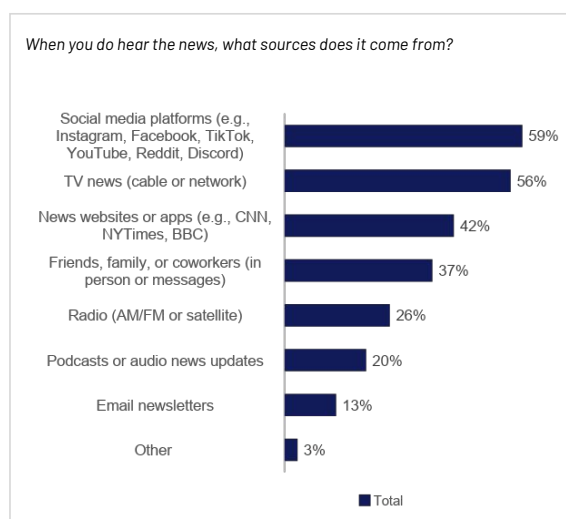
Detailed Results:

Influencer and creator partnerships top PR budget priorities for Marketers.



N=92 Marketers

Social media is an important news platform, especially when reaching those under 55. However, traditional TV news outlets and websites are still key platforms for all ages to get their news as well.



N=1,000 Gen Pop Consumers