

THE POWER OF PRINT

Trust: the ultimate brand builder.

It stands to reason that consumers want to trust the brands they buy. It also makes sense that their trust must be earned. A 2025 study by UK consulting firm Marketreach quantified both the effect of trust on purchasing decisions and the factors that contribute most to building it.

92%

of consumers will “act” or “do something” if they trust a brand, and 74% will act in a commercially impactful way, such as choose the product over other brands or recommend the brand to others¹

In an increasingly social media-dominated world where truth seems less and less important, trust is rising to the top of the list of factors that influence purchase decisions.

59%

of consumers mention “trustworthy” as a reason for choosing an organization, the second-highest ranking factor after “value for the money” (64%)²

TRUST MATTERS, AND PRINT DELIVERS

The Harvard Business Review says business success begins with trust, stating that “businesses that earn their customers’ trust maintain better relationships and reap better results. Meanwhile, breaches of trust between companies and the public are becoming more frequent—and more costly.”³

A 2025 research study by Marketreach, a UK-based marketing and consulting firm, showed that print outperformed digital media in creating or supporting trust.⁴

FACTORS THAT BUILD TRUST, QUANTIFIED

Marketreach set out to measure trust and its impact on brand strength and purchasing decisions by reviewing existing literature, interviewing subject-matter experts and conducting an in-depth ethnographic study on trust’s effect on consumer perception and purchase decisions. The researchers used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to develop insights and quantify trust’s impact.⁵

SEM is a sophisticated statistical technique for analyzing and modeling complex relationships across observed and latent data variables. SEM incorporates “unobserved variables” inferred from observed data to identify connections between variables through a technique called “path analysis” to maximize a study’s explanatory power and draw conclusions.⁶

SEM enabled Marketreach to understand how different, interrelated aspects of company performance and communication impact the many consumer emotions and experiences that contribute to trust, both directly and indirectly.

THE COMMERCIAL IMPACT OF TRUST

One question Marketreach researchers asked study participants was, “What factors contribute most to you choosing a company [or product] over others?” The top answer was value for the money, at 64%—no shock there. The big surprise? The number-two factor was trust/trustworthy, at 59%, almost 10 points ahead of customer service (51%) and quality (50%).⁷

The study found two major contributors to trust for consumers: trust in the brand, and trust in the medium. The most trusted medium? Mail-delivered print, by a factor of three over other media.⁸

TRUST DRIVES ACTION

The Marketreach study found that trust is a significant driver of action for consumers, and a high percentage of that action is commercially impactful. If someone trusts a brand, the data indicated that 92% of them will “act” or “do something.”⁹

And for 74%, that action will have commercial impact, such as purchasing or using the product or service (47%), recommending the brand to friends or family members (43%), trying a brand’s new product or service (30%), or leaving a positive review or rating online (29%).¹⁰

THE ATTRIBUTES THAT CREATE TRUST

Trust drives significant, measurable, positive business results. But what creates consumer trust in a brand? The study provided some answers.

Marketreach tested a total of 125 individual variables that other research showed has an impact on trust, narrowing them down to those that most consistently play a significant role. Among them: reliability—a history of dependable performance/ behaviors—the greatest trust-building factor at 35%, and others that include familiarity, tenure and frequency (and medium) of communication.¹¹

BUILDING TRUST: THE MEDIUM MATTERS

The study also examined how communication builds trust. Data indicated that communication’s contribution to trust boils down to three key variables: the messenger (50%), the medium or channel (42%) and, to a lesser degree, the message (8%).¹² Put another way, the two things that matter most when it comes to trust’s business impact are how much the people trust the brand, and how much they trust the medium.

PRINT IS THE MOST TRUSTED MEDIUM

Of the media tested, 19% of consumers said they trusted print most—direct mail (12%) and unaddressed door drops (7%)¹³—with social media the next-most trusted at 6%, followed by email (5%), radio (3%), television (2%) and app notifications (1%), among others.¹⁴

Marketreach explored multiple variables for more detail on the trust-building power of print, specifically direct mail. They found that 35% believed that direct mail supports perception of reliability, and 12% felt the medium builds familiarity.¹⁵



DELVING INTO THE WHY

So, data showed direct mail to be by far the most trusted channel. But why direct mail? Seven factors came out in the study that explain direct mail’s contribution to trust among consumers across all demographic groups—it’s viewed as more secure, more welcomed, more tangible, more informative, more personal, more easily referenced later, and more enjoyable to interact with than other channels.¹⁶

A few highlights of the findings: Six of 10 people say direct mail is used by trusted companies,¹⁷ with 53% agreeing that print feels more secure and less likely to be tampered with than digital communications.¹⁸ 59% agreed that direct mail is more informative than other channels,¹⁹ while 60% see messages and ads delivered via social media as intrusive.²⁰

PRINT BELONGS IN THE MIX

Some clear takeaways here. Trust drives consumer action. Communication medium is a major contributor to trust. And mail-delivered print is the most trusted of all media. With these facts in mind, it’s also clear that in a marketing world dominated by digital, print can bring a much-needed—and highly valuable—element of trust to the media mix.

Trust is critical to business and brand success and growth. And print delivers it.

— Source 1, 2, 4, 5, 7–20: “The Trust Factor” report: build brand trust with your marketing,” Marketreach, 2025

— Source 3: “HBR’s 10 Must-Reads on Trust,” Harvard Business Review, 2023

— Source 6: “Structural Equation Modeling: What It Is and When to Use It,” Datacamp, October 2, 2024



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