The Gustavson Brand Trust Index 2019 – Automotive Sector Analysis

Consumer trust in automotive brands continues to slip

Missteps from brands like Tesla, Toyota and Volkswagen have deteriorated consumer trust

Analysis for the Gustavson Brand Trust Index (GBTI) 2019 survey has revealed that consumer trust with major automotive companies has continued its downward trend. While overall trust with the major automotive brands has increased slightly from 2016, the average brand trust score saw a slight decrease from last year. This has resulted in the automotive category slipping from the 9th spot last year down to the 13th of 26 spots this year.

Interestingly, our research found that female consumers hold more trust in the automotive industry than males, and that younger generations are less trusting than older generations.

Additionally, our survey found that the lower level of per capita income per household, the less likely consumers were to invest in a new vehicle or replacement tires for their current vehicle. Our survey found that low-income consumers (<50K) are less trusting than the middle-class (50K-125K) and high-income (>125K) consumers.

Tesla continues to fall out of favour with Canadians

While Tesla Motors has enjoyed a great deal of goodwill from consumers by carrying high hopes for a sustainable future along with the vision of a leader who is brilliant and bucking traditional auto manufacturing methods, Tesla's consumer trust continues to downshift.
In our 2016 survey the electric automaker ranked 1st among auto manufacturers and 11th in overall brand trust. By 2018 the company had fallen to 32nd on the index. That downward trend continued this year as Tesla slipped to 12th in the automotive category and 136th overall. This downward spiral can be attributed to disappointing Model 3 production numbers and Elon Musk's erratic behaviour.
As part of the GBTI, we measure belief that brands communicate fairly with us. As we dig deeper into the data, we see that Tesla received a lower score on this attribute compared to its score last year as consumer and investor confidence in both Tesla and Musk continues to decrease. Tesla also continued to lag in terms of word-of-mouth recommendations falling from 158th overall in 2018 to 163 overall in 2019. While Tesla's value-based trust fell from 3rd place to 10th overall, Tesla still continues to lead all other companies in the automotive category. They also ranked as the most innovative and most eco-friendly brand according to the 2019 GBTI results.

Toyota

Toyota has faced enormous safety concerns this year and recalled approximately 5.4 million vehicles. In 2016, Toyota ranked 57th overall in the index, comparatively Tesla was 11th. Last year, the automaker recovered from the recall crisis relatively successfully. In fact, the manufacturer has overtaken Tesla who has dropped down to #32, while Toyota sits in the #11 spot as the top brand in the automotive category.

As revealed in the 2019 Gustavson Brand Index, Toyota is recognized as the leading brand among the others in the automotive category for the second consecutive year although the brand slightly slipped from 11th to 15th overall.

Volkswagen

In 2015, VW broke the trust of its customers and the public by cheating pollution emissions tests. After having received a negative overall brand trust score for three years, Volkswagen's score went up to positive digits. However, that slight increase in its score couldn't stop the brand sputtering in rankings as it came in at #304.

Methodology

7200 Canadian adult consumers aged 18+ responded. The respondents were statistically representative of the Canadian population. Via online questionnaire, each respondent rated 20 brands that were randomly generated. AskingCanadians managed the online survey. The fieldwork occurred from February 5 to February 27, 2019. Measures are based on net scores of the differences between the proportion of respondents who trust and those who distrust individual brands.

Disclaimer
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MOST TRUSTED BRAND IN CANADA
Gustavson School of Business
University of Victoria

Gustavson
School of Business
University of Victoria

Automotive Sector GBTI 2019								
Brand Trust Rank 2019	Brand Trust Rank 2018	Brand Trust Rank 2017	Brand Trust Rank 2016	Brand Name	Values-Based Trust Rank 2019	Functional Trust Rank 2019	Relationship Trust Rank 2019	WoM Rank 2019
15	11	28	57	Toyota	45	9	20	54
29	33	n/a	n/a	Michelin	173	33	67	61
36	19	26	14	Honda	67	14	42	54
64	24	55	53	Mercedes-Benz	212	55	37	158
64	86	57	n/a	Goodyear	193	55	67	120
79	64	87	59	BMW / MINI	212	55	60	145
79	82	n/a	n/a	Bridgestone	193	77	143	145
92	56	68	93	Subaru	119	77	94	176
102	121	133	119	Audi	243	50	80	158
124	79	92	n/a	Harley Davidson	298	191	115	247
136	160	157	140	Mazda	193	123	128	188
136	32	14	11	Tesla Motors	10	77	94	158
153	142	109	79	Nissan	129	102	94	188
153	220	219	226	Mitsubishi Motors	193	179	115	247
193	149	168	135	Hyundai	173	154	94	230
207	214	179	159	Kia	173	199	128	273
236	175	175	165	Ford	119	241	216	273
285	266	270	255	Fiat Chrysler (FIAT, Chrysler, Dodge, JEEP)	282	296	282	293
298	229	263	219	General Motors (including Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, GMC)	282	286	294	295
304	298	294	276	Volkswagen	295	267	298	289