

Unleashing the power of trust with the CMB Brand Trust Score



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How trusted is your brand?

Trust is the bedrock of brand health.

It's a foundation from which brand relationships can grow and deepen. It has a critical, long-term impact on driving brand consideration for prospects and brand satisfaction among customers.

But trust is not simple. It doesn't just happen.

It takes time to build. It takes time to nurture. If not attended to, trust can fade, and once broken, it can be difficult to rebuild.

While many brands recognize the importance of measuring trust, they often lack a detailed understanding of what trust *really* means to customers and prospects – as well as clarity on what steps can be taken to improve trust.

Trust has a long-term impact on brand success

Brand trust impacts companies in significant and tangible ways. Just take a look at some headlines from 2025.

- SONOS, the home sound system company, had technical issues with their app. Even after hiring a new CEO, they continued to face consumer fallout.
- META announced that they are changing how they monitor hate speech. This development caused advertisers to question the impact on advertising.

A word on methodology

At CMB, we set out to uncover the core components of trust and to create a strategic, actionable roadmap that brands in any category can use to measure, strengthen and sustain trust with their audiences.

We undertook a multi-method approach that included:



A Quantitative Survey

Surveyed 1,400 American adults and their experiences with 70 brands across:

- Technology & Telecom
- Financial Services
- Media, Entertainment & Culture

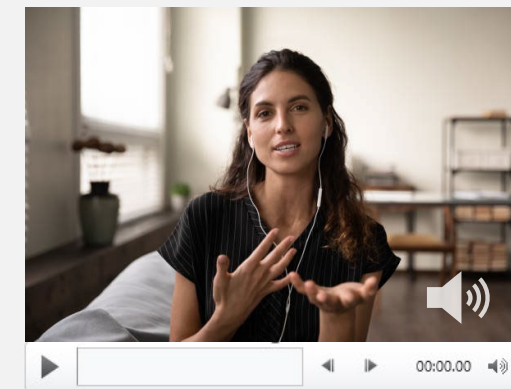
AI Chatbot Smartprobe explored specific experiences related to brand trust, increasing the number of open-ended themes by 46%.



Self-led Qualitative Videos

We also collected 250 self-led videos where individuals from the study shared their perceptions and experiences with the different industries and brands.

We used AI-powered analysis tools, themeAI™ and emotionAI™, to quantify brand trust themes and emotions in the responses.



"In my opinion, trusting a brand means that I trust what they stand for. I trust their actions.

I trust their communications and their marketing.

When they tell me whatever their service or their product is great, then I trust that it is."

AI-Powered Questions Resulted in:

- +75%** Increased response length
- +46%** More themes identified
- 39%** Uncoded responses

Our research revealed the following:

1. The most trusted brands were most likely to be considered for use by consumers in the next 12 months, and the most likely to have satisfied customers.
2. Trust is more than a single belief. It is multi-dimensional, with six key trust factors that are the foundation of trust and remain the same across categories and brands.
3. The relative importance of each component of trust varies by category, meaning brands who focus on the right factors will be more successful in building trust.

STRENGTHENING
BRAND TRUST HAS
AN IMPACT:

BRAND CONSIDERATION

% correlation



*Likely to Consider
Using Brand Next
12 mo.*

BRAND SATISFACTION

% correlation



*Satisfied with Experience
Using Brand*

Understanding the CMB Brand Trust Score

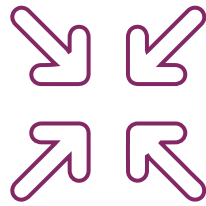
The CMB Brand Trust Score is a weighted combination of factors developed for each sub-category of the 70 brands measured in our study.



We began with consumers evaluating brands against a **large set of brand trust dimensions**.



Next, we created **factors** to identify the key measures needed in our Trust metric.



We tested to ensure that our **reduced set of dimensions** were just as good at modeling Trust as the larger set.



We developed our Brand Trust Score to include **6 key factors** with a weighted combination of attributes in each.

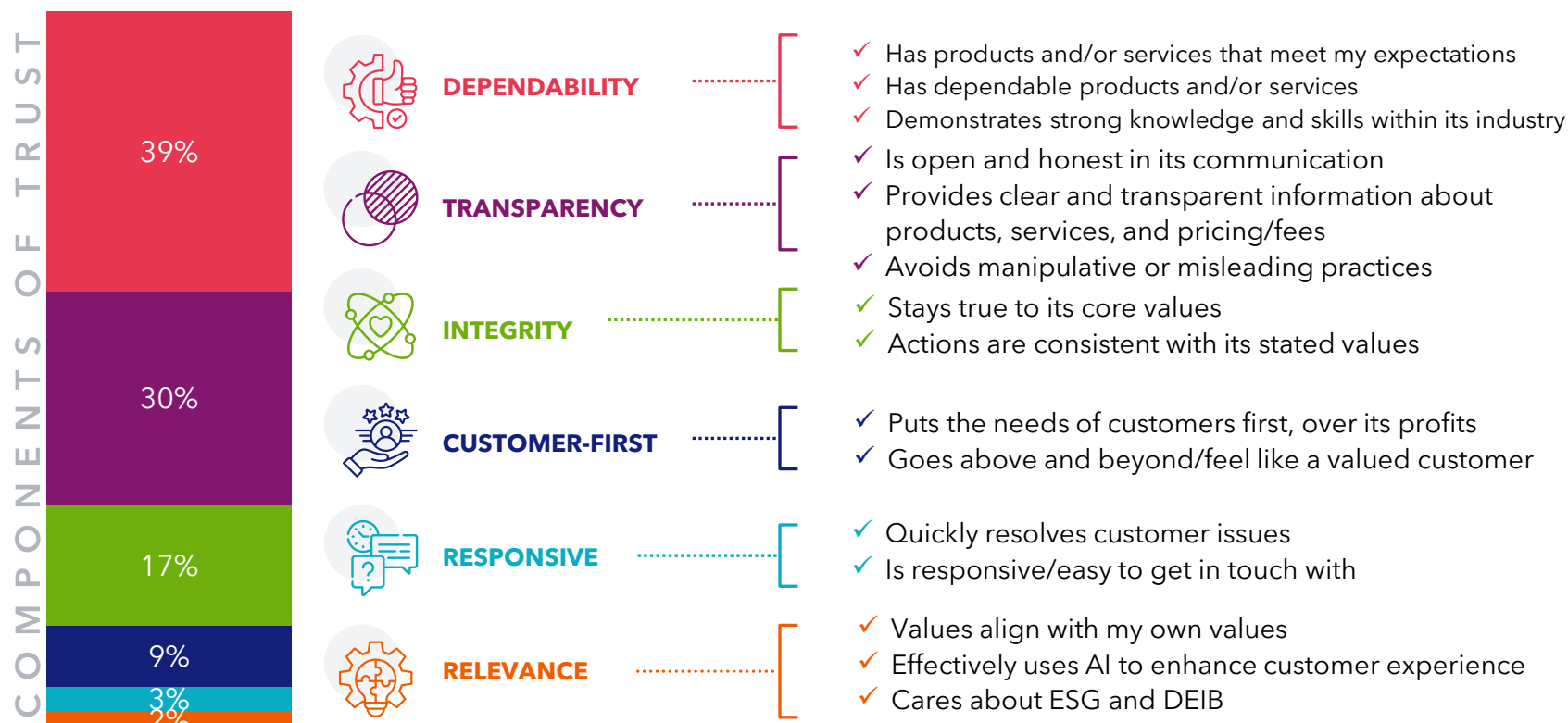
"Our goal with this work was to identify the different components of trust and then make it all highly actionable."

- Jay L. Weiner, Ph.D.
Chief Methodologist, CMB

The six pillars of trust

Dependability and Transparency were the most ubiquitous factors across categories.

While other factors were lower overall, they were key factors in specific categories:



Why is AI not emerging as a significant trust factor?

Our research showed that AI adoption is still early, with close to 45 percent of Americans still not using GenAI. Consumers did not appear to be impacted by AI in many of the brands they rated.

Right now, the only categories where AI is potentially showing up as a concern is within the relevance factor for **ticketing** and **social media**, where AI has a more visible effect on consumer experiences.

We believe that in the coming years, AI will have more of an impact on trust as it becomes more ubiquitous, and consumers run into issues with it.

Trust levers: Variance and consistencies

Trust levers vary, but there are consistencies across industries.

While the factors of trust are consistent across industries, we noticed the importance of each factor was impacted by the overlap of the industries. We factored this into our analysis and split up the categories into 9 sub-categories:



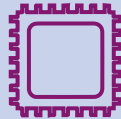
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Fintech
Traditional Card + Banking
Traditional Investment Firms



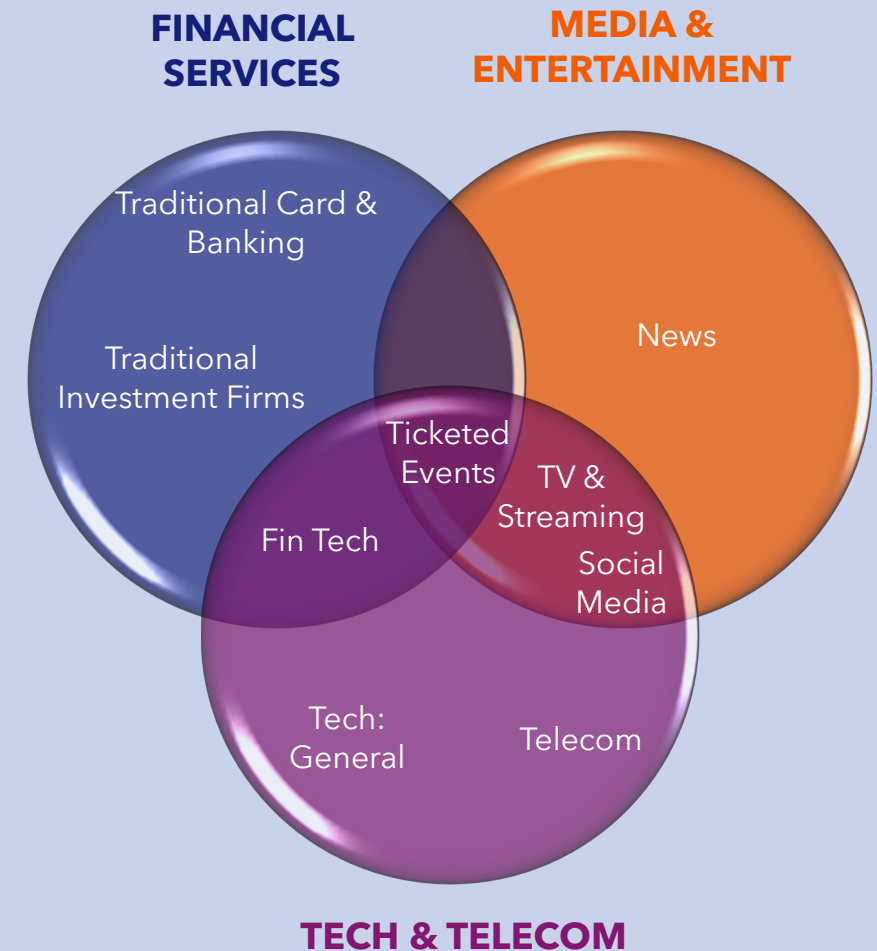
MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

TV & Streaming
News
Ticketed Events
Social Media

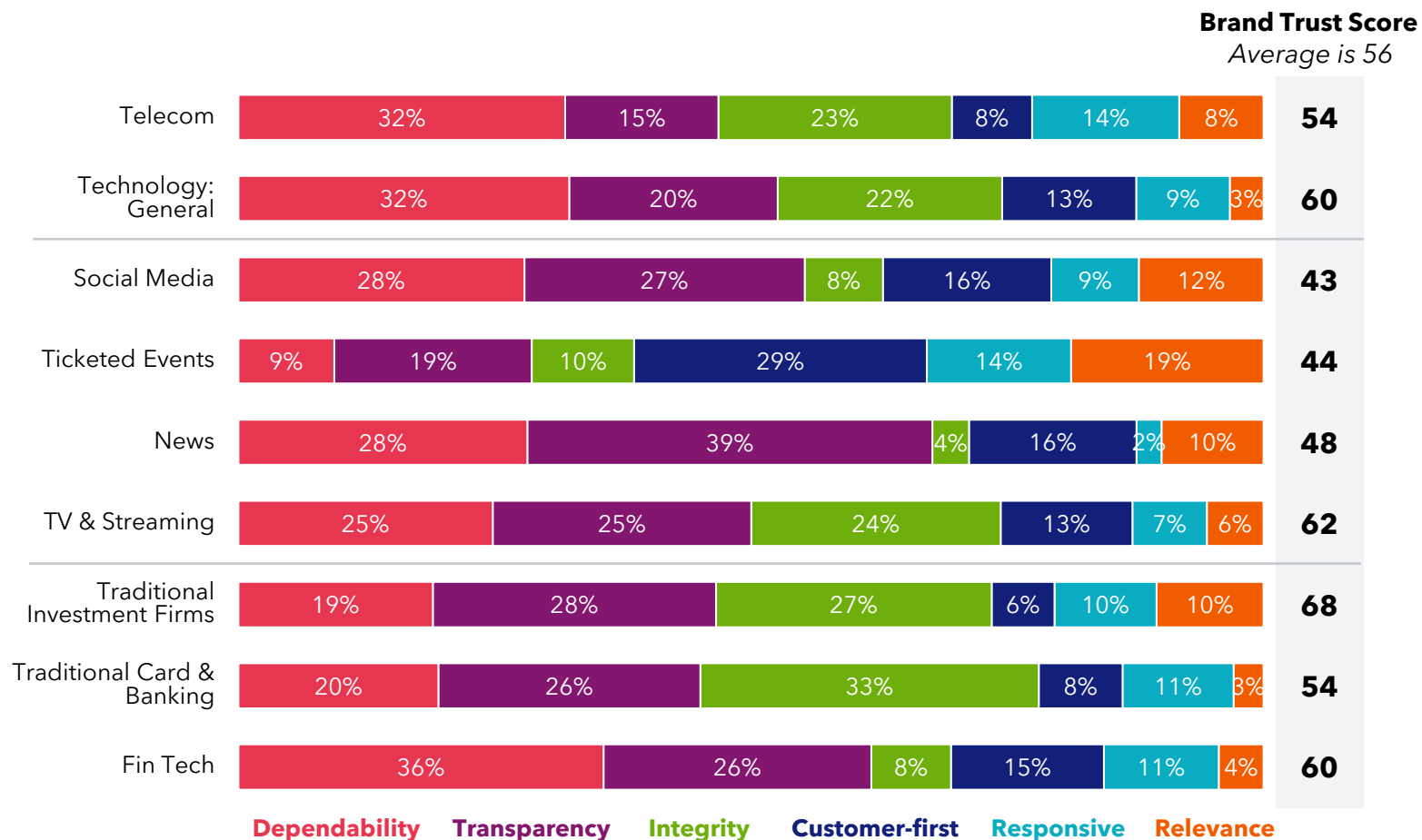


TECHNOLOGY & TELECOM

Technology (General)
Telecom



Components of trust by industry type



- **Integrity** and **Transparency** are fundamental to building trust in Traditional Financial Services brands that are driven by relationships.
- **Transparency** is the most important component of trust for News & Social Media brands. This is not surprising considering all that is going on today.
- **Customer-First** matters the most for Ticketed Events brands where consumers want to be confident they can push a button and get the tickets they want.
- **Dependability** is of importance for tech-driven categories, including Fintech.

"There's a lot of value in proactively evaluating examples against these drivers in your industry and outside of it. It allows you to be aware and stay ahead of what others are doing."

- Lisa McFarland
AVP, Activation, CMB

Where different brands land on trust

We grouped each brand into one of three categories: lower trust, moderate trust and higher trust. This list does not reflect all 70 brands we measured, but enough to illustrate how the tiers naturally fell into place.

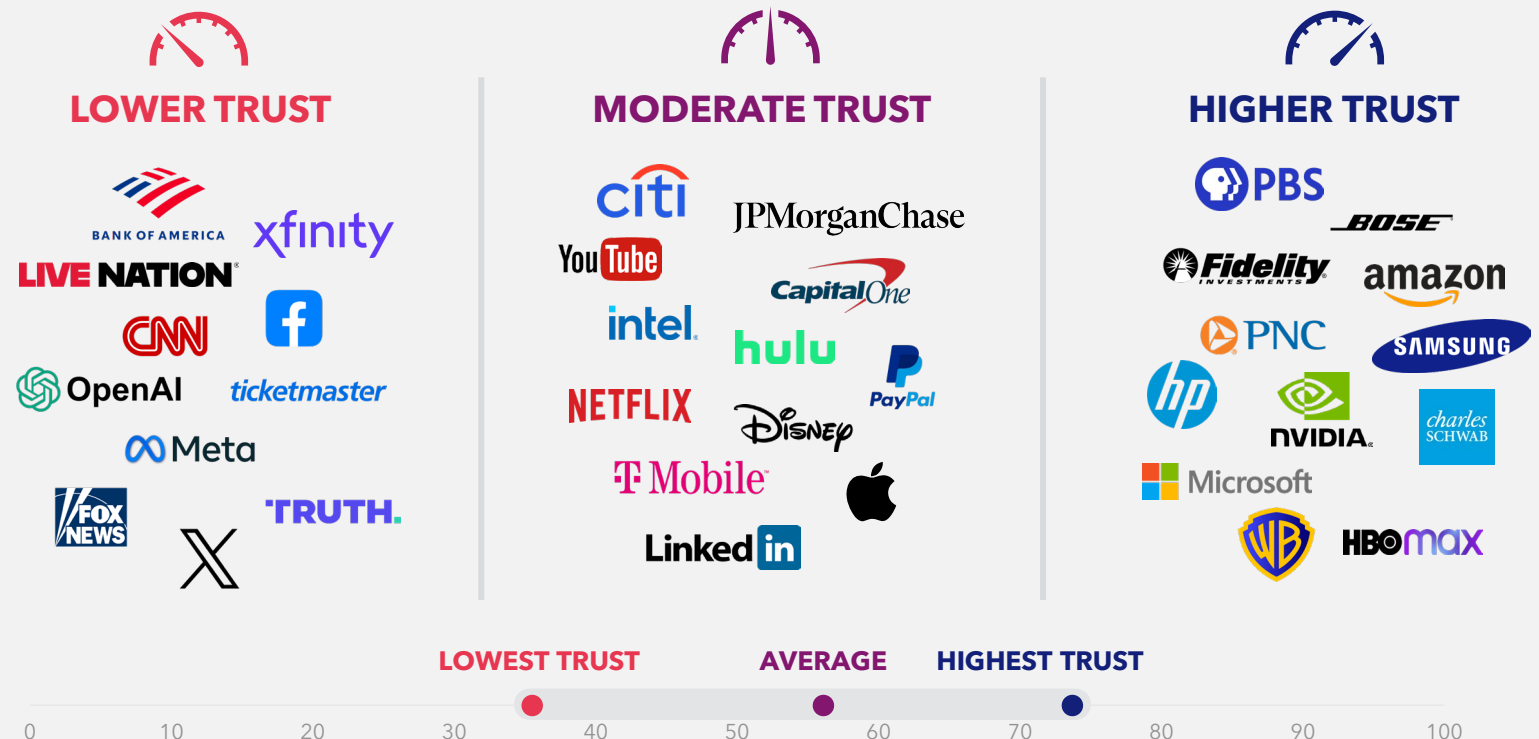
At CMB, we thought the trust metric made intuitive as well as analytical sense.

Brands like PBS, Amazon, and Fidelity use their high trust to help differentiate their brands and insulate them from the competition. Brands on the lower end like META and Ticketmaster can improve their scores by addressing what is most important to consumers in driving trust.

"Knowing which lever to pull, and how to engage consumers for a given trust component, is where CMB can help brands build trust to drive adoption and loyalty."

- Lori Vellucci

SVP, Financial Services Practice Leader, CMB



Robinhood, a fintech investment platform, scored a “51” below the “60” Fintech average. So, being at the lower end, the company clearly has work to do.

From here, we built a brand trust simulator to determine what to do next. It indicates that improving perceptions around Dependability (meeting service expectations and demonstrating expertise) can significantly strengthen their Brand Trust Score.

We also explored our open ends to understand 1) what consumers are saying about Robinhood’s dependability, 2) what is being said about the competition and 3) specific examples of how the brand and competition have created or eroded trust.

The result is a recommended path forward to improve their score, in this case via messaging. We can track trust based on specific investments Robinhood makes in marketing, product innovation, or customer experiences. And, we can measure trust over time to determine how much the changes are driving satisfaction and consideration.

How to use the CMB Brand Trust Score: Robinhood

BRAND TRUST DECISION SIMULATOR

Sub-Category Importance	Sub-Category mean score	<input type="checkbox"/> Top Down	Reset Base	Brand:		
				Brand: Base mean score	Simulated mean score	Change
26.3%	6.0	Transparency	5.0	5.0	0.0	
	6.0	Is open and honest in its communication	5.2	5.2	0.0	
	6.1	Provides clear and transparent information about products, services, and pricing/fees	5.0	5.0	0.0	
	5.9	Avoids manipulative or misleading practices	4.7	4.7	0.0	
35.8%	6.2	Dependability	5.3	5.9	0.6	
	6.2	Has products and/or services that meet my expectations	5.1	6.1	1.0	
	6.3	Has dependable products and/or services	5.3	5.3	0.0	
	6.2	Demonstrates strong knowledge and skills within its industry	5.5	6.5	1.0	
4.4%	5.3	Relevance	4.9	4.9	0.0	
	5.5	Is a company whose values align with my own values	4.7	4.7	0.0	
	5.2	Effectively uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance customer experience	5.1	5.1	0.0	
	5.3	Cares about ESG and DEIB	5.0	5.0	0.0	
14.5%	5.6	Customer First	4.6	4.6	0.0	
	5.5	Puts the needs of customers first, over its profits	4.5	4.5	0.0	
	5.7	Goes above and beyond to make me feel like a valued customer	4.7	4.7	0.0	
11.3%	6.0	Responsive	5.0	5.0	0.0	
	6.0	Quickly resolves customer issues	5.0	5.0	0.0	
	6.0	Is responsive/easy to get in touch with	5.1	5.1	0.0	
7.8%	6.0	Integrity	5.1	5.2	0.1	
	6.0	Stays true to its core values	5.2	5.2	0.0	
	6.0	Is a company whose actions are consistent with its stated values	5.1	5.1	0.0	
60.0			Brand Trust Score	51.0	53.0	2.0

Sub-Category
Fin Tech

Brand
Robinhood

Robinhood

51

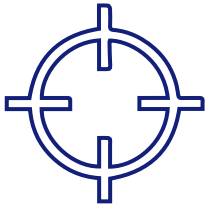
Brand Trust Score

vs.

60

for the Fin Tech category

So, what's a brand to do?



1. Conduct a formal industry check

We can share these results with you by brand and category to understand where your brand fits and simulate the impact of making changes.

If your brand wasn't included, ask us how we can quickly supplement the research results.



2. Strategic brand assessment

Together, we'll review what's working and what's not today. That includes evaluating current initiatives and leveraging our qualitative results along with your internal research and/or secondary data to understand what your team can stop, start or pivot to maximize Brand Trust.



3. Monitor your brand

Determine how to best track your Brand Trust over time, either through new study, web-scraping, or modifying an existing tracker. Identify key metrics to quantify how people feel, and scenario plan for the future.



An ITA Group Company

About CMB

Headquartered in Boston, CMB is a leading insights and strategy consultancy. Recognized by GRIT as a Top 50 Most Innovative Company, we're known for elevating business impact with expert-driven insights and AI-powered strategies. Our senior consultants bring deep industry knowledge, combining the best of AI and human intelligence to deliver validated solutions that drive results. Through impactful storytelling, we align stakeholders and inspire action, ensuring our clients' strategies translate into meaningful business success. CMB is part of the ITA Group of companies. <https://www.cmbinfo.com/>

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