

Roy Morgan

# Australia's most trusted

Australians are adamant about the brands they trust and distrust.  
Directors need to pay more attention to their moral compass.

By Michele Levine, CEO Roy Morgan Australia

**Our private and business lives** run on trust, but a prevalent culture of moral blindness is contributing to a tsunami of distrust. Trust and distrust are two of the most significant social imperatives of our age. Critically, they are not two hands in one glove. Distrust is not an absence of trust on a scale of positive sentiment. It is the opposite of trust – antithetical to trust.

Trust requires a leadership that embraces and exhibits social ethics; to not just plan how to behave, but to believe it. If you don't fundamentally feel that what you're doing is the right thing it will never be believable.

So why was no-one measuring and reporting distrust? Roy Morgan set about asking Australians what brands they trust and distrust – and Australia's banks come out as the most trusted sector. But we also measured distrust and it transpires that banks are the most distrusted category in Australia – more distrusted than trusted.

Trust doesn't really matter for sales next week, but it matters for a sustainable future for a brand. If you have insufficient trust you're not going to get supporters or partners. Distrust erodes future value and that's the big risk.

## Drivers of trust and distrust

Why do Australians trust or distrust the nation's favourite brands? The top driver of trust is customer service, but the highest aggregated drivers of trust coalesce around honesty, ethical behaviour and integrity. Roy Morgan says the top principal drivers of trust in 2018 are:

1. Good customer service
2. Honesty
3. Ethical behaviour/integrity
4. Previous good experience with company
5. Reliability
6. Transparency
7. Social conscience/good corporate citizen
8. Good quality products
9. Long history
10. Customer-focused.

And distrust? According to the data, the main drivers of distrust coalesce around the belief that brands are greedy, put their profits before customers, and are unethical or corrupt.

The top three drivers of distrust are:

1. Greed, self-interest, profits before customers
2. Dishonest and deceitful, false and misleading advertising, making false product claims
3. Being unethical, lacking integrity.

## The method

Between October 2017-May 2018, Roy Morgan conducted four longitudinal surveys asking about 4000 Australians which brands they trusted and which they didn't. Subtracting the distrust score of each nominated brand from its trust score gave a Net Trust Score (NTS). Every respondent was also asked why they trust or distrust their nominated brands.

Brands with positive NTS have a strong positive sentiment base among consumers (and relatively low negative sentiment) from which to generate growth and brand value.

## Don't just "look the other way"

The Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry is, at its core, an inquiry into the moral blindness of directors and executives charged with protecting our money.

Directors need to constantly be conscious of their own ethics, their governance and corporate culture, to drive down distrust and eventually build trust in their brand. Unless directors, governments, banks, social media platforms and sporting leaders arrest distrust before they start to rebuild it, moral blindness will keep eroding our culture and socio-economically productive behaviour.

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Michele Levine, CEO Roy Morgan Australia

## Trusted Positive NTS\*

ALDI  
NRMA  
Bendigo Bank  
Qantas  
Bunnings  
Kmart  
ABC  
IGA  
Australia Post  
ING

## Distrusted Negative NTS\*\*

AMP  
ANZ  
CBA  
Coles  
Facebook  
NAB  
Optus  
Telstra  
Westpac  
Woolworths

\*In ranking order

\*\*Alphabetical with no ranking