

Winning Consumers' Trust In An Age Of Demographic Diversity

Malaysian consumers are a diverse bunch of ethnicities. The most successful brands are trusted by every different ethnic group. Their trust ratings are similar on every dimension, regardless of race.

Which brands have high ratings of trust among all ethnicities? In a recent Trust study by Duxton Consulting, the only brands rated in the top 10 by all ethnicities were Shell, Toyota, Maybank, WhatsApp, and AirAsia. These brands have a multi-ethnic appeal and scored highly on every trust dimension.

The success of WhatsApp and AirAsia show that it is not necessary to have a long history to be trusted highly. These two brands have built two key drivers of trust among all communities: relationship and benefit. They have created a positive, enjoyable relationship with their customers and are delivering a greatly appreciated personal benefit.

However, racial bias is clearly a factor in brand affinity in Malaysia. There are clear differences in the levels of trust in Companies between Malays and Chinese. In general, any brand involving a Governmental heritage, interest or ownership is trusted highly by Malays: Petronas, MAS, Perodua, Proton.

Among Chinese, Proton and MAS were the least trusted brand in the Duxton survey. The key trust

dimensions that drove this ethnic difference were Competence and Development. Chinese do not rate the performance of these brands highly, nor do they see them progressing well in the future. Malays do. Conversely, Chinese tend to trust Companies and brands which they perceive to have a Chinese heritage and ownership: Public Bank, Singapore Airlines, HSBC, Tiger Airlines. However, among Malays, HSBC, Tiger and Singapore Airlines are among the least trusted brands. This lack of Malay trust is primarily in the areas of Relationship and benefit. There is little personal affinity for these brands among Malays even though they see them as very competent at what they do. Finally, Chinese are much more cynical about brands than any other ethnicity. Their levels of trust are significantly lower than for other races. So they are a hard bunch to get on side and create high levels of trust and loyalty. Conversely Malays are the most trusting ethnicity with trust scores far higher than other races. They are more trusting in Companies to deliver what they promise, and build stronger personal affinities with brands.

Is your brand trusted equally by all ethnicities? If not, have you identified the specific trust drivers which are weak and created strategies to overcome mistrust?