

Trust

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Today, trust in brands is in crisis. Consumers do not want to do business with a company that they think is untrustworthy. According to the [2019 Edelman Trust Barometer](#), only one in three consumers trust most of the brands they buy or use.

Brands around the world are looking to establish a deeper sense of trust with their customers through the power of visual storytelling. Customer searches for '[Trust](#)' have gone up 126% in the past 12 months.

Archetypes of trust are seen across all brand communication. At Getty Images we track how trust and trustworthiness in people pictures evolve visually. How do we cast people that look trustworthy? And how are opinions and feelings about trust changing?

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As part of a global psychometric survey we undertook with the help of [Nielsen](#) across 182 countries and 82,000+ in five different languages, we tested 'Who Do you Trust the Most' across our imagery. The results were illuminating. Women trended much higher than men as being the most trustworthy and the top two responses were both images of female medical practitioners. This is noteworthy as so many healthcare providers still feature male doctors or surgeons with females as support staff. When we further broke our data down across profession, age, gender, geographic location and personality types we found that personality has far more influence on image choice than profession, gender, age and geographic location.

In the aftermath of the global financial crash of 2008, consumer trust in financial services institutions across the board was destroyed. In response, men in suits reappeared as brands desperately sought to rebuild that lost trust. We saw middle aged white men and phrases like 'have confidence in us'. 'We are solid' and 'we have been around for a while'. Interestingly, something similar happened in the ICT industry after the Dotcom crash of 2001. After five years of men in jeans and t-shirts on skateboards, those men started to don - you guessed it - suits. This messaging did not work. Thankfully since 2010 we've seen a return to imagery better in tune with the world - the use of 'real' people and what matters to them - and these trends are even more important in today's world.

People want and expect imagery to be representative of the world they see around them. What is clear from our research is that brands need to be not just be representative and 'real' in their visual communication, but it is also about truth. It is about the whole journey, from subject, through photographer to consumer. If you are showing for example somebody that has a disability, it cannot be a model pretending: it has to be true. Furthermore, it has to be a true representation through empathy and experience.

Brands need to strive harder towards trusted authenticity in their communications, or risk alienating or at the very least not engaging their existing or prospective customers. In order to establish trust through visual storytelling, truth and authenticity are key. Don't Fake 'Real'.