

TRUTHFUL CONSUMERISM

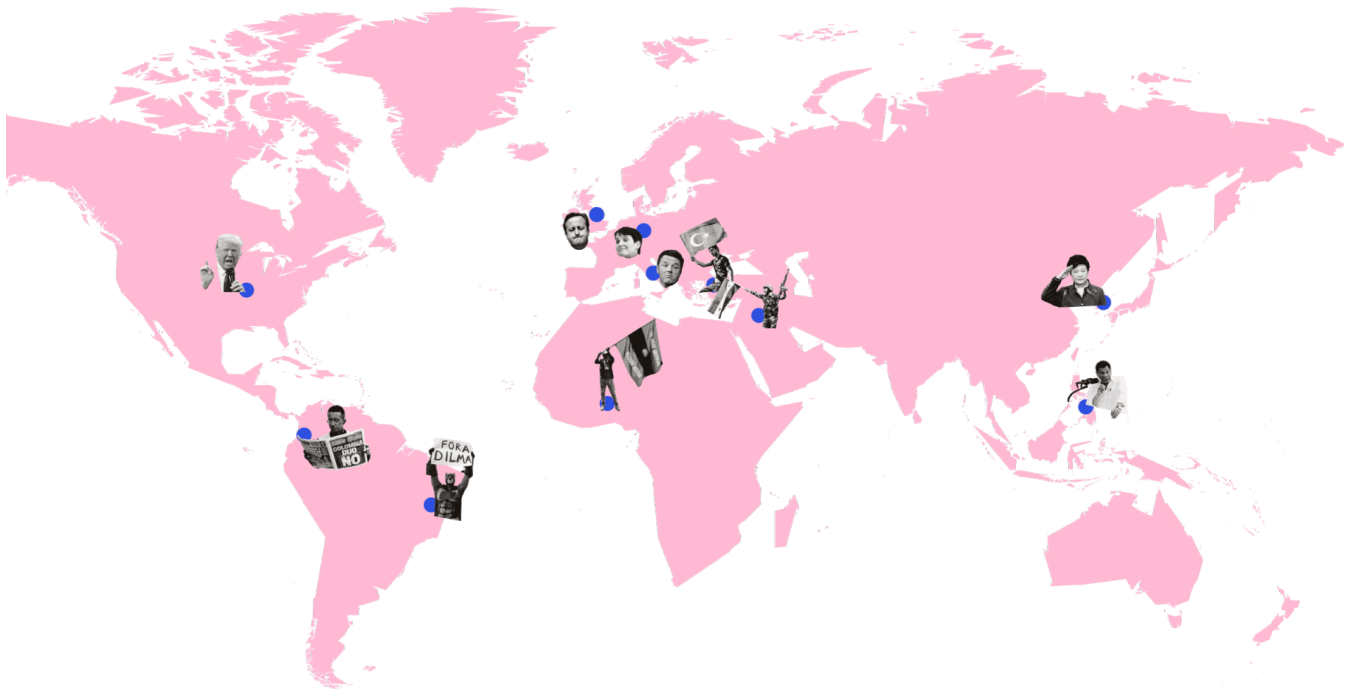
WTF is going on?

The world – politically, economically, socially, technologically – is in flux. That's not news, fake or otherwise. But what does this all mean for the future of consumerism, and for brands?

Well, here's some *good* news:
despite all the uncertainty of this
new moment, organizations that
focus on five core human truths
will launch themselves into a new
era of growth, meaning and
opportunity. Find out how...

Brave New World

First, a quick recap of the cataclysms of 2016.



For those who want the details: the election in the **US** of Donald Trump and the **UK's** vote to leave the EU were earthquakes that woke up the world to the emergence of a new order. But they are only the most high-profile episodes in a global story. In **Germany**, the rightwing populist Alternative for

Germany saw success in September's regional elections. In **Italy**, prime minister Matteo Renzi resigned in December after losing a referendum on constitutional reform. **Turkey** saw a failed coup d'état, and subsequent reprisals further polarized the country. In the **Philippines**, hardline populist Rodrigo Duterte was elected president on the promise of a violent war on drugs. In **South Korea** a populist wave, including massive street protests numbering 2 million people, led to the impeachment of president Park Geun-hye. **Colombia** saw tumult when a peace deal between the government and Farc was rejected in an October referendum, only for the government to ratify a revised deal in December. **Brazil** was polarized around the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. And **Nigeria** saw unrest focused on those agitating for Biafran independence. Phew...

Evidence enough that 2016 ushered in a new moment: one characterized by polarized societies, the emergence of new populisms and large doses of anger. In December The Oxford Dictionary took the pulse of the year when they announced their word of 2016:

post-truth

Adjective

Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

Where are we now?

But enough observation. Instead, let's turn to some hard (in more ways than one) numbers. A glimpse

of where we're at in 2017. According to the latest Edelman Trust Barometer:

Global trust in government, media, business and NGOs has fallen to its lowest levels ever. Most people say they are concerned about globalization. 59% say the system is failing, against only 15% who think it is working.

Shocking, yes. But are you really surprised? This new global moment - and the decline in trust that is a part of it - might have arrived in 2016, but it's been fueled by deep drivers that have been playing out for years:

- **Massive inequality.** A popular sense, shared by millions, of being shut out of the gains created by globalization. And yes, that sense is made more acute by the relentless visibility of one percenter lifestyles in all their Instagrammed 'glory'.
- **Mass migration.** From Syria to China to Mexico, mass economic and politically-driven migration and refugee crises are triggering social tension, the rebooting of nationalisms and the emboldening of old prejudices.
- **Post-truth.** Online, rising numbers exist inside a filter bubble that serves them information, ideas and news (some of it fake!) that serves to confirm what they already think. The result? Rising polarization.

- **Future shock.** Vast, ongoing changes to economies, patterns of work and lifestyles, brought about by technology. Millions are aware that even greater change is coming, via automation, AI and more. And that means an uncertain – and perhaps less habitable – future.

No wonder this moment can seem uncertain, chaotic, and even toxic. And for brands? It doesn't take much to see that they're operating in a more volatile environment.

Remember [#deleteUber](#)? Over 200,000 accounts went down the drain. Budweiser rebranded as America during the 2016 Presidential election. [It didn't work](#). Then it ran an immigration-related Superbowl ad. That triggered Trump supporters to [#BoycottBudweiser](#) (oh, and [#boycottbudwiser](#) ;)

Got four minutes?

Here's Truthful Consumerism explained by David Mattin, our Global Head of Trends of Insights:



So, what does all this mean for business and brands? What's the future of consumerism in this new moment? How should you respond? How can you survive and thrive in this new environment? Our position in a nutshell:

The future still belongs to those who believe in progress. And progress comes via innovation. Your response as a brand to this new moment? Innovate to build a better future – for all.

Yes, we know that this new era poses serious challenges to governments, individuals and, yes, to many brands. However there's also a massive opportunity here. This is a uniquely powerful moment to prove who you are as a brand. What you mean, what you believe, and how you make the world better. So your response in this new moment? Harness the power of innovation to build a better future. No, it won't be easy. Yes, sometimes it will mean dealing with realities – even people –

you don't like. But that's no excuse to give up on the power of innovation to fuel progress!

Okay. But how?

Amid all the change and uncertainty of this moment, a set of core truths about our shared future are as relevant as ever.

Transparency. Aspiration.

Positive Impact. Tolerance.

Empowerment. These truths are powerful – and positive – directions of travel sweeping through many advanced and emerging economies.

Ground your innovation in one (or more!) of these forces, and you will ground it in something meaningful and lasting.

To be clear: we're not saying that after 2016, nothing needs to change! Quite the opposite: we and many others have been saying for years now that much *needs* to change. And it's via these five powerful forces shaping our shared future that positive change can and will happen. That is, if innovators seize on them and take action.

So the question becomes: are you going to be part of that story? If you're thinking yes, then let's take a look at the five truths in more detail...

SUBSCRIBE

Never miss a TrendWatching Quarterly Briefing!

Sign up

TRUTH #1

THE FUTURE IS STILL TRANSPARENCY

Post-truth doesn't change the global, rapid, epic onward march towards a future of ever more reliable, useful, instantly accessible information.

The future is still truth. Or, more specifically,
transparency!

[Read more](#)

(Reading time: 5 mins)

TRUTH #2

THE FUTURE IS STILL ASPIRATION

The drive to get ahead. To do better - than the rest,
than yourself. To become a better person, and
make sure everyone sees it. That impulse is as old
as human nature, and ultimately driven by the

eternal quest for social status. And it's not going away.

[Read more](#)

(Reading time: 8 mins)

TRUTH #3

THE FUTURE IS STILL POSITIVE IMPACT

Sure, there are millions around the world who simply want more, faster, cheaper, bigger, tastier, shinier. But the truth is that long-term direction of travel is on the side of brands that have a positive

impact on the planet, society and individuals.
Here's why.

[Read more](#)

(Reading time: 8 mins)

TRUTH #4

THE FUTURE IS STILL TOLERANCE

The impulse to accept, empathise with and embrace others - to recognise their shared humanity - is a part of our nature. That's why we live in a rainbow-fuelled utopia of shiny, happy people, right? If only! So why is tolerance of others - their

different backgrounds, lifestyles, choices and identities – still the future?

[Read more](#)

(Reading time: 8 mins)

TRUTH #5

THE FUTURE IS STILL EMPOWERMENT

We're in the middle of an epic power shift away from institutions – think government, social organizations, big business and more – and towards the individual.

Read more

(Reading time: 5 mins)

Conclusion, aka You May Say We're Dreamers

Think we're painting too rosy a picture of the future? What about the millions who *won't* tolerate difference and diversity? What about the millions who *don't* care about truthful and accurate information? What about the millions who realistically *can't* afford to focus on anything other than where their next meal is coming from?

Yes, we're taking a position. We know it's an idealistic one. A position founded in an optimistic view of humans and our shared ability to create change.

Because the truth is that the future does not exist yet. We – and specifically you – have to build it. It will be built via innovation. And your brand should play its part.

Yes, some brands will choose instead to cynically ride the darker forces currently helping shape events. And that might work, for a while. Some will seek out where the truths conflict, either in reality or in perception. Yes, the middle classes of the 'old world' fear that their economic aspirations will

clash with those of the next billion in Asia and Africa. People will ask whether positive impact is affordable? If transparency is always a good thing? If tolerance can survive an 'other' that is set on your destruction, apparently? But the reality is that the truths are both deeply human and mutually reinforcing. Don't try and cherry-pick one that suits you. It won't work, long-term.

In the end, the only insurance against destruction as a brand is to be creating authentic, meaningful value. Now, with that ringing in your ears, it's time to **GET GOING!**

SUBSCRIBE

Never miss a TrendWatching Quarterly Briefing!

Sign up

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Reinier

IT TAKES A TEAM:

This Trend Briefing has many hands on it. A huge thanks to the team that pulled this together with such positivity and enthusiasm, especially: Acacia Leroy, Alida Urban, Anton Bjorklund, Chris Class, Francesca Coppola, Gillian Harris, Harry Metzger, Harvey Gomez, Henry Mason, Jack Saunders, James Treacher, Jessica Tindle, Laura Varetto, Laurie Roxby, Lola Pedro, Luciana Stein, Lyubo Popov, Maxwell Luthy, Nikki Ritmeijer, Vicki Loomes and Vicky Kim. THANK YOU!

RELATED



REGIONAL TAKE

Truthful Consumerism in Asia

Post-truth, Asia-style. Why aspiration and empowerment will be two truths that successful Asian brands will live on.

[Read more](#)

Free	Students	About	Subscribe
Trend Platform	Educators	Method	Log in
Events	2024 Trend Check	Team	Contact
Webinars	Community	Clients	Privacy
Speaking		News	



100,000+ professionals who receive our Free Trend Updates:

Join our work email her

Sign up