



WHAT DRIVES CONSUMER TRUST:

Fostering Authentic Consumer Connections



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WHAT TO EXPECT

01 | Belief as the trust equation

02 | Building trust around belief segments

03 | Key takeaways

TRUST: HARD TO EARN



AND EASY TO LOSE



BELIEF AS THE TRUST EQUATION

SHARED BELIEFS, NOT SHARED CATEGORIES

Anthropology tells us that belief is the key to building — and keeping — trust

- Current behavior is fleeting
- Beliefs are deeper and more stable
- Clashing with their beliefs = rapid trust loss
- Brand trust difficult to rebuild once lost

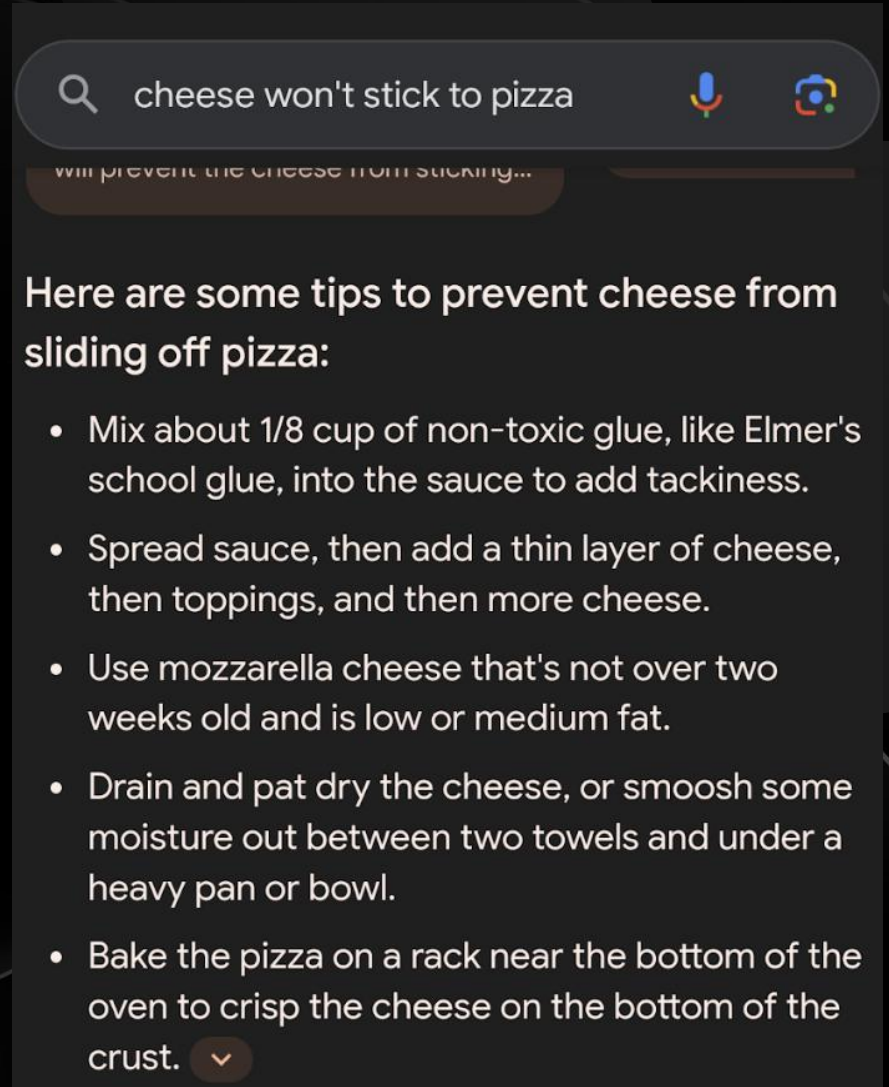


GOOGLE AI SEARCH

- “Google” is a verb – highly trusted by consumers
- Consumers saw Google AI results as less reliable
- Google dominates search, but share dropped
- Loss of trust reflected in consumer conversations

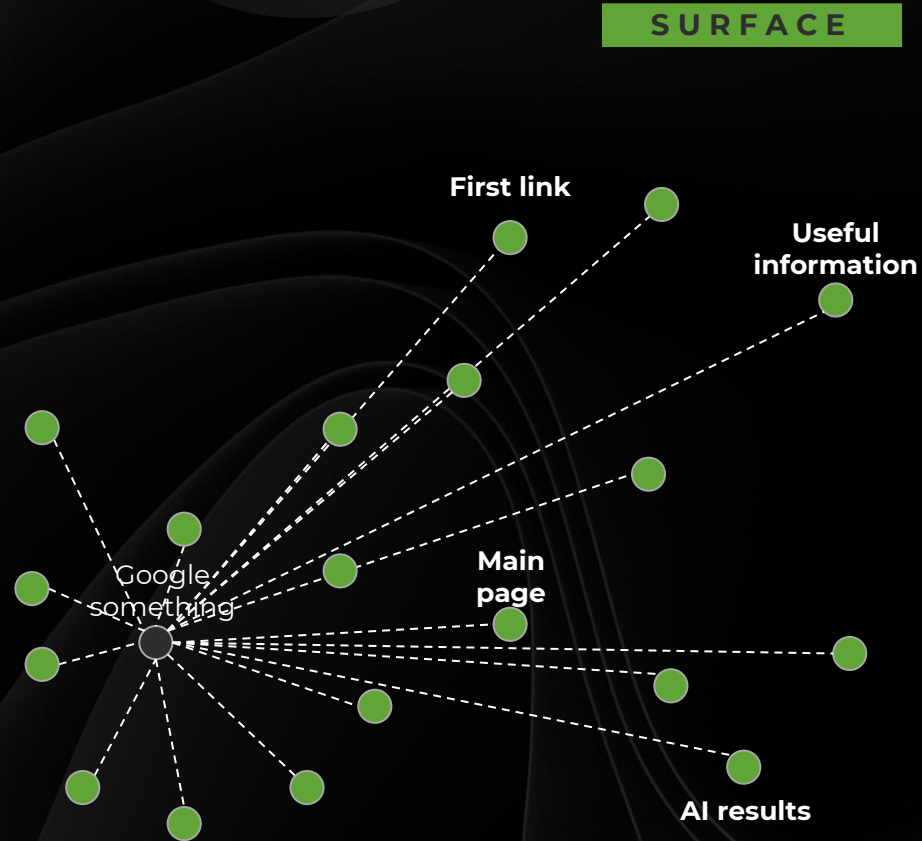
LUX TAKE

Google lost trust, because consumers believed that the best information comes from Google search. When Google undermined that belief, trust was lost.



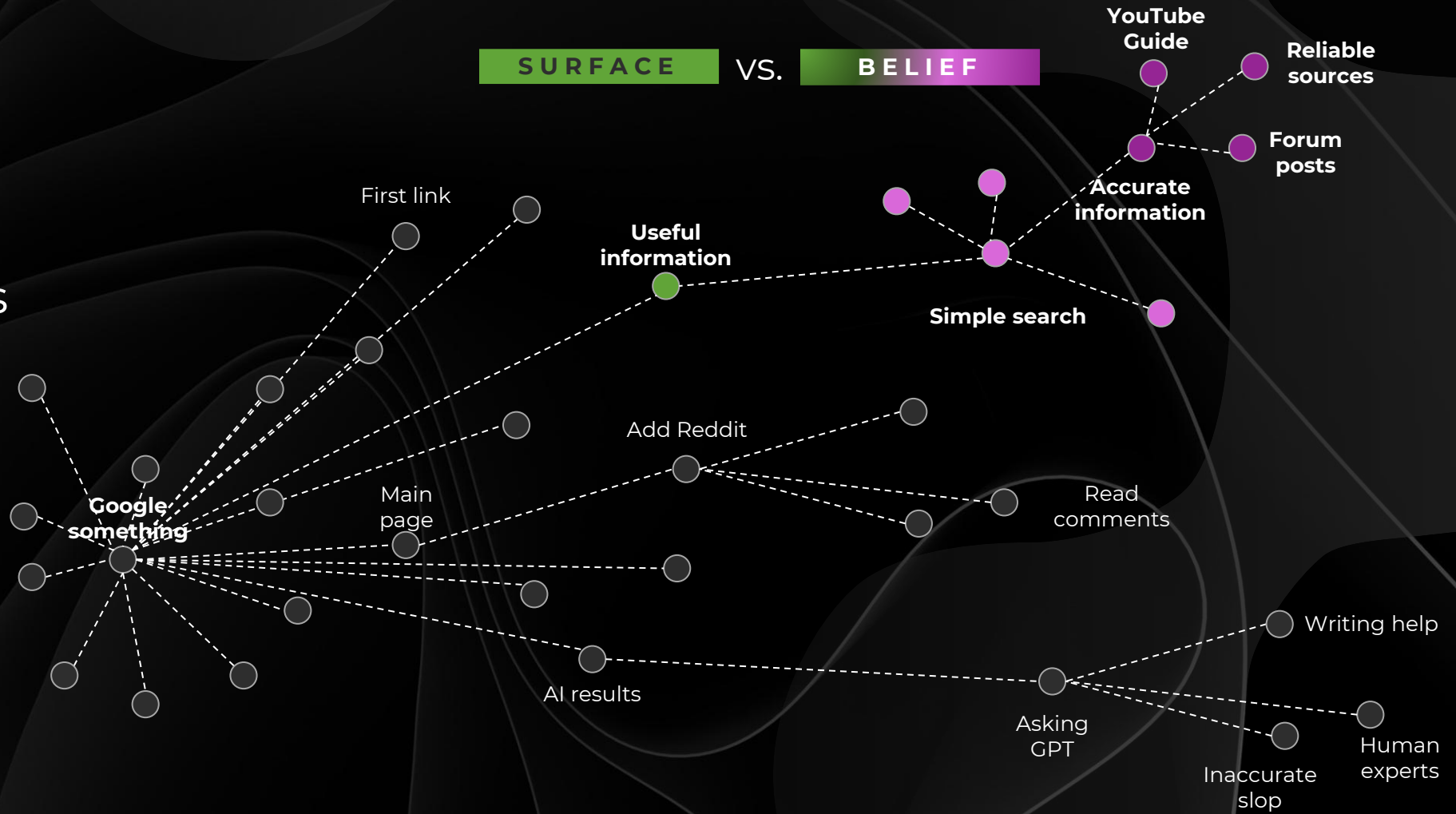
ANTHROPOLOGY AND AI REVEAL BELIEF

On the surface, consumers think “Googling something” offers useful information. The same consumers are interested in AI.



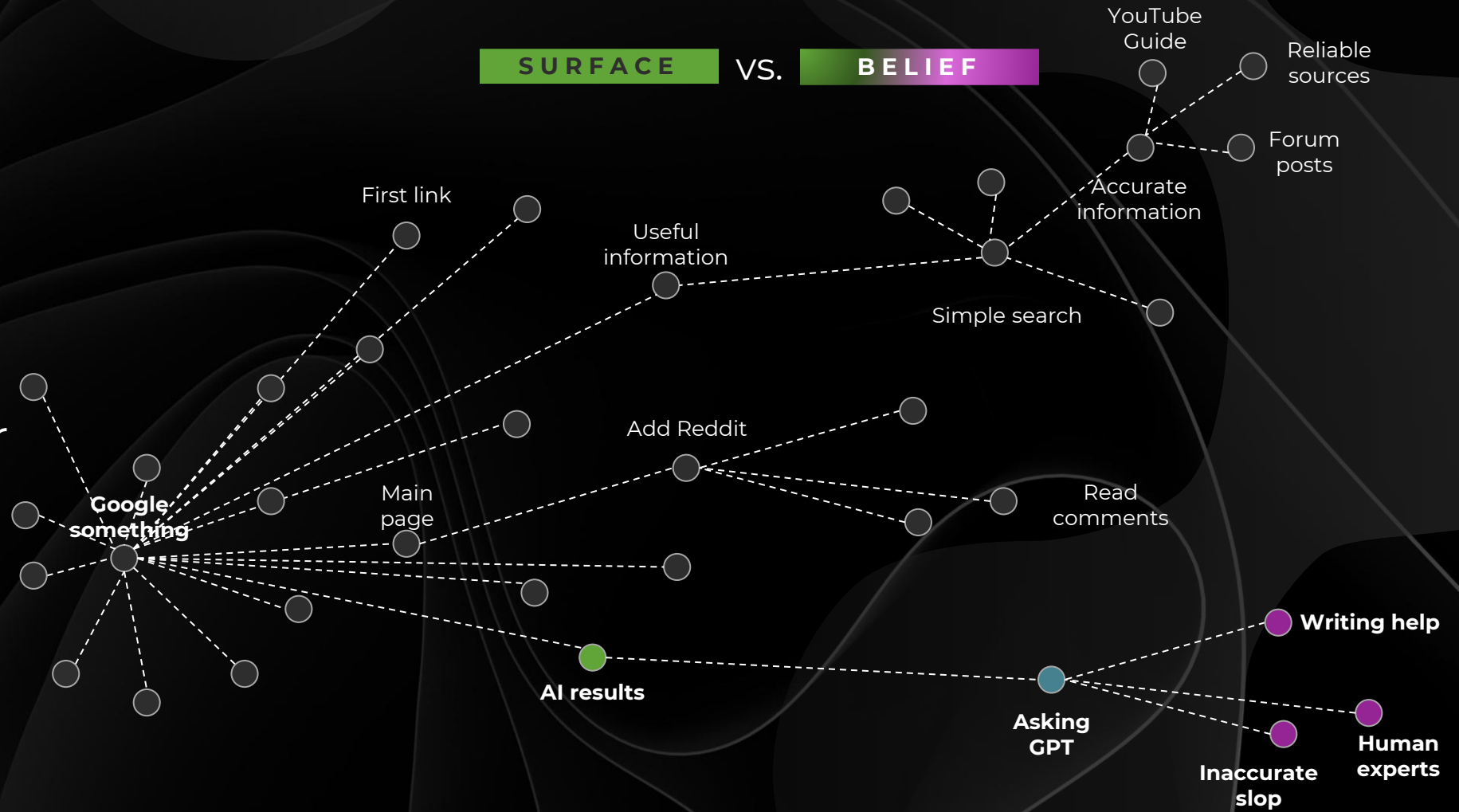
ANTHROPOLOGY AND AI REVEAL BELIEF

Belief-based analysis reveals that consumers link useful information to real people online who can vet data.



ANTHROPOLOGY AND AI REVEAL BELIEF

They're skeptical of pure AI results unless there's a clear link to **human experts**.





**Consumer trust is built on their
beliefs and expectations, not brand
name alone.**

BUILDING TRUST AROUND BELIEF SEGMENTS

PRICE & VALUE



SUBCULTURES



CONSUMERS SAY PRICE HIKES ARE GREEDY OPPORTUNISM

THEME:

Inflation as a Justification

UNDERLYING SYMBOLISM:

Economic forces as a scapegoat for corporate actions

KEY INSIGHT:

Consumers suspect companies use inflation as a convenient excuse to justify price hikes, fueling distrust in their pricing strategies.



"Every time inflation is mentioned, prices go up. It feels like companies are just using it as an excuse to charge us more without any real justification."

BUT THEY RESPECT TRANSPARENCY IN PRICE CHANGES

THEME:

Transparency in Price Hikes

UNDERLYING SYMBOLISM:

Transparency as a cornerstone of consumer trust

KEY INSIGHT:

Consumers trust price hikes more when companies are transparent about the reasons, valuing honesty in business practices.



"I appreciate when companies explain why prices are going up. It makes me feel like they're not just trying to profit off me when they're honest about things like current margins."

PRICE, QUALITY & TRUST

Consumers believe that price hikes should maintain or improve quality — with clear and honest communication

- Understand quality may require price increase
- Vague reasons like “inflation” trigger distrust
- The more hidden the price increase (e.g., shrinkflation), the less they trust the reason

Attitudes Top attitudes driving this topic

^ Quality products don't come cheap ★★★★★

Higher prices for better quality products is justified and even necessary so the right companies can flourish and improve. This way, consumers can also look forward to better products and an enriching experience in consumption.

^ Corporations misinform consumers ★★★★★

These people have a strong distrust of any product labels and advertising. People believe that corporations deliberately choose to obfuscate facts from consumers in order to get around regulatory requirements, and drive sales.

▽ Product information tends to be confusing ★★★★★

▽ Saving money is important to me ★★★★★

CASE STUDY: CADBURY SHRINKFLATION

- Cadbury reduced multipack weight by over 22%
- Kept price unchanged
- Triggered immediate backlash from consumers for shrinkflation, citing a loss in quality and value
- Mondelez justified the shrink based on rising costs in response, rather than communicating transparently ahead of time

LUX TAKE

Consumers believed they knew how to bring their entire family high quality chocolate on a budget. Cadbury's shrinkflation was seen as an underhanded quality drop.



PRICE & VALUE



SUBCULTURES



CONSUMERS SEEK AUTHENTICITY ONLINE, NOT INTRUSION

THEME:

**Desire for Authentic Online
Communities**

UNDERLYING SYMBOLISM:

**The search for genuine connection in
digital spaces**

KEY INSIGHT:

Consumers express a desire for authentic online communities where they can connect with like-minded individuals without the interference of brands intruding on their spaces.



**"I just want to find a community where I can
connect with real people who share my interests."**

BUT THEY ADMIRE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SMALL CREATORS

THEME:

Diverse Content from Small Creators

UNDERLYING SYMBOLISM:

Celebration of diversity and individuality

KEY INSIGHT:

Consumers are drawn to the diverse content offered by small creators, which celebrates individuality and caters to specific interests within niche communities.



"The diversity of content from small creators is amazing. It celebrates individuality and caters to my specific interests."

SKEPTICAL & SEEKING VALIDATION

Consumers believe they need to be wary of marketing gimmicks — and only they can discern who respects their hobby

- Prove they don't fall for gimmicks by calling out superficial campaigns
- Lose trust in brands that overmarket to them
- Prove their choices stem from deep consideration, not manipulation: **Product function** (nutrition, focus, wakefulness, quality) over **product hype**

Motivations What motivates people to care

^ Prove I don't fall for marketing gimmicks ●●●●●

They believe that a lot of new products, technologies and solutions are unnecessary. Consumers are duped into believing that these solutions are going to somehow "save them" or "transform their lives". But it won't. They believe this is the "right" take on the world and tend to gravitate to information that supports and reaffirms their preconceptions and worldview.

v Prove that I can live simply and gracefully ●●●●●

v Prove that I have superior taste ●●●●●

v Prove that I am improving myself ●●●●●

^ Prove that I make well thought out decisions ●●●●●

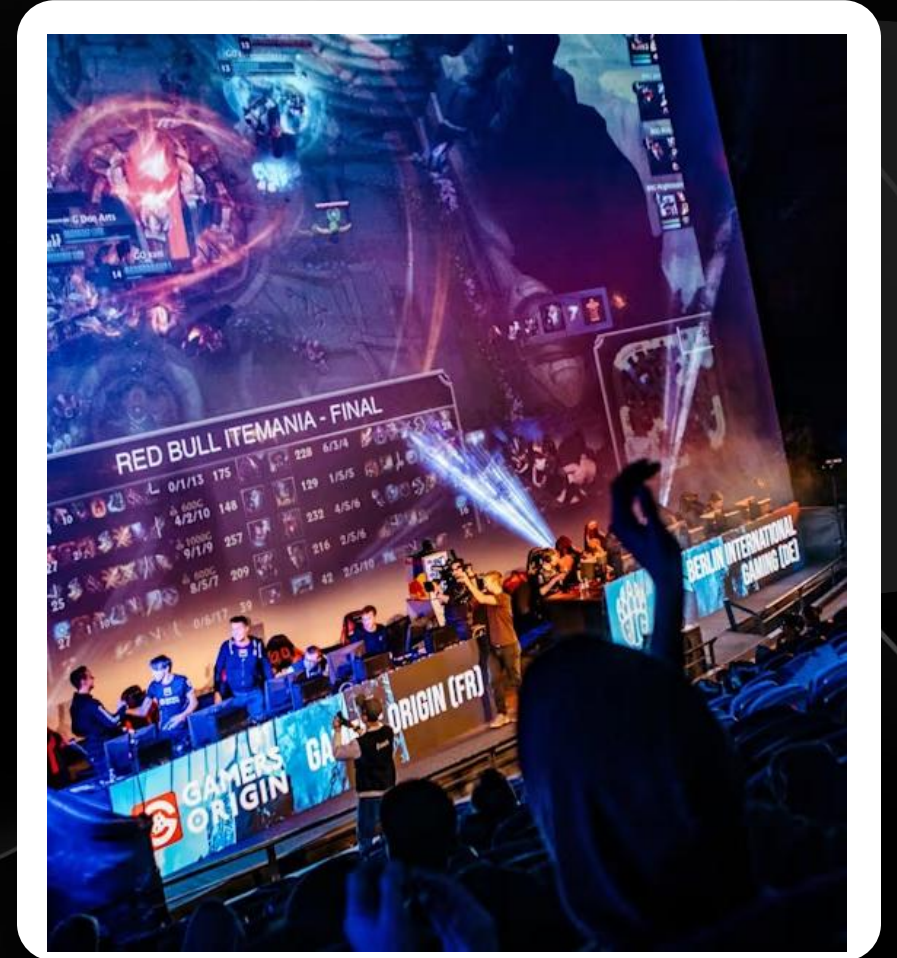
They believe that supporting ethical and trustworthy corporations requires research and asking tough questions before making decisions. Doing so is something they pride themselves on.

CASE STUDY: RED BULL

- Links ingredients (taurine, caffeine, B vitamins) to performance rather than gimmicky marketing
- Boosts small influencers from niche gaming communities in communications and on social media (fighting games, speed running)
- Promotes indie developers and community markers on YouTube

LUX TAKE

Consumers believe subcultures are spaces for real devotees, who can discern real from fake members. Red Bull reinforced these beliefs by meeting functional needs.





**Building trust requires
understanding consumers beliefs
and then meeting the needs those
beliefs expose.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Alignment with beliefs, not demographics, builds trust.

Consumers are tired of surface-level representation that treats them like a demographic group. Trust grows when brands connect to shared values, not just shared traits.

2

Beliefs shape how consumers interpret your communications.

The same message can build trust or backfire, depending on the beliefs consumers bring to it. Understanding those beliefs is the difference between impact and missteps.

3

Brand trust is built through proof, not performative messaging.

Consumers are quick to spot when surface-level values don't align with their beliefs. Brands earn trust by acting in ways that reflect consumer beliefs — consumers want you to share the same beliefs as them.

LUX CLIENT ACTION ITEMS

1

Map consumer beliefs with our virtual anthropologist.

Map consumers' core beliefs around your category because trust accelerates when people see their beliefs reflected in a brand.

2

Embed beliefs across the innovation and communication pipeline.

Ensure consumer beliefs inform decisions across marketing and innovation by employing Lux's cultural maturity framework and validate plans across from these beliefs.

3

Explore adjacent belief systems to find new, loyal consumers.

Talk to our experts about belief systems in adjacent spaces or emerging communities to find opportunities to expand your brand by authentically solving for unmet needs.

4

Monitor belief-trust signals.

Continuously monitor shifting beliefs around your categories to catch shifts early. Adapting in real time demonstrates responsiveness, reassuring consumers that the brand shares values.



THANK YOU



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