

Canadians rank Loblaws, WestJet, Via Rail, Roots, National Museums as socially responsible and ethical

Dalhousie study finds high levels of trustworthiness do not necessarily affect Canadians' usage of retailers, however

Wednesday, January 31, 2018 (Halifax, NS) – A new study from the Faculty of Management at Dalhousie University asked Canadians which retailers and government departments they think are the most trustworthy, socially responsible, environmentally friendly and ethical. The results, published today in Canada's first **Social License to Operate** report, ranked transportation providers, retailers in the food and clothing sector and government departments.

Roots and Mark's were ranked highest in the clothing retail sector, while H&M and Forever 21 ranked lowest of the organizations included in the report. In the food retail sector, local food suppliers ranked highest, with Loblaws coming in second and Sobeys last. Via Rail and WestJet were ranked highest in the transportation sector, while Air Canada ranked lowest. Among government departments, National Museums, Parks Canada and the CBC were ranked highest, while the CRA ranked lowest.

The authors hope that the report will provide valuable insight about how Canadians view the organizations they interact with most frequently in their daily lives. "We tried to choose sectors that all Canadians would have experience with," explains Vivian Howard, lead author of the report. "Everyone eats, everyone has to clothe themselves and get from place to place, everyone deals with the government in one way or another."

The report, which will be released yearly, is the first of its kind in Canada. "Similar social licence studies have been conducted in the past," explains Tony Walker, co-author, "but they have typically been restricted to just one organization or company and often restricted to just one geographical area. This study is unique because it is national in scope, covers several sectors and is demographically diverse."

The results come not long after the December 2017 news that Loblaws had turned themselves in to the Canadian Competition Bureau for the chain's involvement in fixing bread prices. The data for the report were gathered before that news came to light. Dr. Howard is looking forward to seeing what effect, if any, this will have on next year's results. "We're very interested to see if this will have an impact on people's trust," she says.

Surprisingly, the results suggest that high perceived levels of trustworthiness, social responsibility and sustainability are not consistently equated to frequency of use. In two sectors, government departments/services and transportation, high rankings actually have a negative correlation with reported usage. In food retail, local food suppliers received the highest rankings, but Canadians are more likely to patronize the national retailer Loblaws.

Only in clothing retail was there a strong and consistent positive correlation between social license to operate and high usage. Furthermore, survey respondents demonstrated a strong preference for Canadian clothing retailers in their perceptions of the retailers' social license.

In addition to Dr. Howard, who is from Dalhousie's School of Information Management, and Dr. Walker, from the School for Resource and Environmental Studies, the report was prepared by Peggy Cunningham from the Rowe School of Business, Jeff Friesen from the School of Public Administration, Michelle Adams from the School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Allison Kader, a graduate of the Master of Resource and Environmental Management program and Tyler Lightfoot, a student in the Master of Library and Information Studies program.

Dr. Cunningham explains that the researchers are very interested to see how the results differ next year. "Findings from the poll will be used as a benchmark to see how Canadians' perceptions of organizations evolve over time," she says. "This year's pilot study is just the beginning."

For more information, read the complete [Social License to Operate Ranking report](#).

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