



## **BrandSpark Announces Canada’s Most Trusted Award Winners for Retailers (Brick & Mortar and E-Commerce) and Service Brands as Voted by Canadians**

*Over 5000 shoppers named their most trusted brands across 58 categories: 19 major retail, 23 e-commerce retail and 16 service categories in the second annual national study*

**TORONTO, ONTARIO (October 30, 2017)** – Market research firm BrandSpark International today announced the 2017 BrandSpark Most Trusted Award winners for Canada’s major services and retail categories, including brick and mortar and e-commerce. In spite of recent retail closures and major competition from the U.S., six brick and mortar retailers lead their categories from coast-to-coast, including: Dollarama (discount stores), Canadian Tire (auto parts & accessories), Sleep Country Canada (mattresses), Best Buy (electronics), Walmart (houseware/kitchenware) and Toys “R” Us (toys and games) even though Toys “R” Us recently filed for creditor protection. Details can be found at [www.BrandSparkMostTrusted.com](http://www.BrandSparkMostTrusted.com).

“Shoppers look to retailers that they trust to deliver great value, strong selection, quality goods, and when online, timely delivery. The BrandSpark Most Trusted Awards give shoppers a chance to see which retailers are trusted by other Canadians,” said Robert Levy, President of BrandSpark International. “These endorsements are especially useful for shoppers who don’t regularly shop the category – particularly in e-commerce where many shoppers are still discovering the major retail players.”

### **What Drives Brand Trust?**

“Canadians say their trust in a brand is greatly increased by personal experience, responsiveness, transparency, fair pricing, and the endorsements of other consumers,” said Levy.

It is important that a brand responds quickly to serious issues, with 73% saying it greatly increases their trust in the brand. Transparency is also key to building trust. In fact, 56% agree that brands that provide detailed information about their product or service earn trust, and 49% say trust is built when they see unfiltered customer reviews on the brand web site. A majority of online consumers now seek reviews to support their purchase decisions, and they read both positive and negative reviews to get a more complete picture. Without this information, many shoppers will not complete a transaction.

Positive endorsement in the form of awards is also very impactful with 85% of respondents stating their trust in a brand increases if it has won awards based on the feedback of consumers.

Pricing also influences trust as much as product or service quality, with brands that offer consistent and competitive pricing more likely to be perceived as fair and honest.

In the general retail study, participants named the retailers they trust most across 19 categories. The winners are listed below.

**Brick & Mortar Retail Winners**

General Retail Category	2017 WINNING Retailer	1 <sup>st</sup> Runner-up	2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner-up
Auto Parts & Accessories	Canadian Tire	Napa	Parts Source
Beauty & Personal Care	Shoppers Drug Mart / Pharmaprix	Walmart	Sephora
Clothing / Fashion	The Bay / Winners (tie)	--	Walmart
Department Store	Walmart	The Bay	Sears
Discount Store (NEW)	Dollarama	Walmart	Giant Tiger
Electronics	Best Buy	The Source	Walmart
Furniture	The Brick / Leon's (tie)	--	Ikea
Gas Station (NEW)	Petro-Canada	Shell	Esso
Hardware Store (NEW)	Home Hardware	The Home Depot	Rona
Health / Pharmacy	Shoppers Drug Mart / Pharmaprix	Jean Coutu	Rexall
Home Décor	HomeSense	Winners	Ikea
Home Improvement / Hardware	The Home Depot	Home Hardware	Rona
Housewares / Kitchenware	Walmart	Canadian Tire	Kitchen Stuff Plus
Major Appliance Retailer (NEW)	Sears	The Brick	The Home Depot
Mass Merchant	Walmart	Costco	Canadian Tire
Mattress Retailer (NEW)	Sleep Country Canada / Dormez-Vous	Sears	The Brick
Sporting Goods	Sport Chek	Canadian Tire	Sports Experts
Supermarket / Grocery	Real Canadian Superstore	No Frills	Metro
Toys & Games	Toys "R" Us	Walmart	Mastermind Toys

The Canadian retail landscape is dotted with strong regional players and the most trusted retailers vary across Canada in many categories. This is particularly true for Quebec, where home-grown retailers are often most trusted.

Six retailers lead their categories from coast-to-coast, including Dollarama (discount stores), Canadian Tire (auto parts & accessories), Sleep Country Canada (mattresses), Best Buy (electronics), Walmart (houseware/kitchenware) and Toys “R” Us (toys and games) even though Toys “R” Us recently filed for creditor protection.

Regional players are strong in Quebec, including Brault & Martineau for furniture and major appliances, Bouclair for home décor (in a tie), and Jean Coutu for beauty & personal care and health/pharmacy. While in the rest of Canada Home Depot is on top for home improvement (or tied in the Atlantic region), Rona is most trusted in Quebec.

The grocery landscape also changes by region. Loblaw brands are strong with the Superstore brand (Real Canadian Superstore and Atlantic Superstore) on top nationally, anchored by a leading position in the Western provinces and No Frills earns top spot in Ontario. In Quebec, IGA and Maxi tie. Sobeys is most trusted in Atlantic Canada.

Sears shows up as the most trusted retailer for major appliances. “Now that Sears has decided to liquidate all of its stores and cease operations in Canada we can expect fierce competition from other retailers to fill the void. This could present some great opportunities for Canadian shoppers,” added Levy.

### **E-Commerce Retail Winners**

Canadian shopping habits are evolving. According to the BrandSpark Canadian Shopper Study, seven in ten Canadians shop online in a typical month and online shoppers expect to make a larger share of purchases online in the coming year.

“As the retailers that Canadian shoppers know and trust continue to build their presence on e-commerce, we expect to see trusted brick and mortar brands become more prominent online. To succeed in the transition to e-commerce, retailers must deliver *online* the value and experience that has made them trusted *offline*, while also meeting the high expectations of online shipping and no hassle customer service and returns set by the e-commerce leader Amazon,” said Levy.

In the BrandSpark Most Trusted Online Retail Study, shoppers specifically named the retailers *online* that they trust most across 23 retail categories. Listed below are the national winners.

E-Commerce Category	2017 WINNING Retailer	1 <sup>st</sup> Runner-up	2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner-up
Auto Parts & Accessories	Amazon	Canadian Tire	eBay
Baby & Children's Clothing	The Children's Place	Old Navy	Carter's
Beauty Products / Cosmetics	Sephora	Amazon	Avon
Books	Amazon	Chapters/Indigo	Kobo
Electronic Gaming / Videogames	Amazon	Best Buy	EB Games
Electronics	Amazon	Best Buy	eBay
Flights	WestJet / Expedia (tie)	--	Air Canada
Food & Beverage (non-perishable)	Amazon	Walmart	Well.ca
Grocery / Fresh Food	Walmart	Real Canadian Superstore	Amazon
Health & Wellness	Amazon	Well.ca	Walmart
Home Appliances	Amazon	Best Buy	The Home Depot
Home Decor	Amazon	Wayfair	Ikea
Home Improvement / Renovation	The Home Depot	Amazon	Rona
Housewares / Kitchenwares	Amazon	Walmart	The Bay
Laptop/Desktop Computers	Best Buy	Dell	Amazon
Men's Clothing / Fashion	Amazon	Old Navy	The Bay
Personal Care	Amazon	Well.ca	Walmart
Pet Care	Amazon	PetSmart	Walmart
Shoes / Footwear	Amazon	The Bay	Sport Chek
Sporting Goods	Amazon	Sport Chek	MEC
Toys & Games	Amazon	Toys "R" Us	Walmart
Travel / Accommodation	Expedia	Trivago	Hotels.com
Women's Clothing / Fashion	Old Navy / Reitmans (tie)	--	The Bay

When Canadians shop online, Amazon is the most likely destination for a wide range of products. Walmart is close behind for food and beverage products. “With the recent acquisition of Whole Foods by Amazon, the grocery category is expected to become very competitive in the next few years,” added Levy.

Although Amazon is top-of-mind for e-commerce, several specialized retailers have been successful, including: Sephora (beauty products & cosmetics), Well.ca (health & wellness), PetSmart (pet care), and Home Depot (home improvement & renovations). These retailers lead their categories or are competing closely with Amazon.

“If other retailers want to catch up with Amazon in their category, they need to stay top-of-mind as their customers move online, and deliver the online browsing experience, selection, value, and service required to be shoppers’ go-to destination in the category,” said Levy. “Amazon’s leadership in voice-activated shopping will make it even harder for traditional retailers to catch up.”

### **Most Trusted Services Brands**

For the first time, the BrandSpark Most Trusted Awards program has been expanded to service categories where trust matters greatly to Canadians. Winners are listed below.

Service Category	2017 WINNING Brand(s)	1 <sup>st</sup> Runner-up	2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner-up
Airline	WestJet	Air Canada	Air Transat
Alarm Service	ADT Security Services	AlarmForce	Vivint
Auto Insurance	Intact Insurance	ICBC	Belairdirect
Bank	RBC / TD	--	Scotiabank
Car Rental	Enterprise	Budget	Avis
Credit Card	Visa	Mastercard	RBC
Dating Site	POF	Tinder	Match
Home Insurance	Intact Insurance	The Co-operators	Wawanesa Insurance
Hotel	Best Western/ Hilton/ Marriott	--	--
Internet Provider	Bell	Shaw	Rogers
Life Insurance	Sun Life Financial	Manulife	London Life
Loyalty Program	Air Miles	PC Plus	Shoppers Optimum
Mobile Telecom	Telus	Rogers	Bell
Online Banking	RBC / TD	--	Scotiabank
Real Estate	RE/MAX	Royal LePage	Century 21
TV Service	Shaw / Bell	--	Rogers

In the airline category, both WestJet and Air Canada are trusted by Canadian consumers who largely prefer booking flights with Canadian airlines. “In fact, WestJet is propelled by its advantage in Western Canada,” added Levy.

In the insurance categories (home, auto and life), Intact Insurance comes out on top with their Canada-wide service in auto and home insurance while Sun Life is the leader in life insurance with Manulife being a strong runner-up.

In the competitive banking space RBC and TD are tied as Canadians turn more to online banking. In the car rental category Enterprise Car Rental comes out on top, followed by budget-minded Budget, and service-led Avis.

Despite recent controversy, Air Miles is still valued by many Canadians as the top loyalty program especially by those who can realize larger point gains via credit cards. In fact, everyday retail programs are gaining more importance with PC Plus and Shoppers Optimum rounding out the top three in this category.

In the ever-expanding world of online dating, despite the rapid rise of Tinder, when it comes to trust Canadians cast their nets with Plenty of Fish.

The area where geographic location plays a strong role is in the telecom categories with clear regional splits that sees Telus identified as more trusted than Rogers and Bell. In the internet provider category Bell comes out just ahead of Shaw and Rogers nationally. For television service, Shaw catches up to Bell with Rogers being the runner-up.

In an increasingly fragmented real estate market filled with boutique players, national giant RE/MAX has maintained a dominant position, ahead of runner-ups Royal LePage and Century 21.

### **How Winners are Determined**

More than 5,000 respondents surveyed in 2017 determined the 2017 BrandSpark Most Trusted Awards retail winners through their “top of mind” responses for retail and services categories in which they shop. BrandSpark researchers analyzed the unaided responses and the reasons for trusting the retailer or service. Results were ranked based on the greatest volume of mentions, and if the difference between retailers or services nationally was less than three percent, ties were declared.

### **About BrandSpark International**

BrandSpark International uniquely combines real world consumer insight with marketing credentials and services. BrandSpark Insight gets at the heart of WHAT consumers think, WHY they act the way they do, and HOW marketers need to respond to successfully grow their business. BrandSpark Marketing Services runs major CPG awards programs Best New Product Awards, BrandSpark Most Trusted Awards and consumer product trial and amplification platform, Shopper Army. For more information, visit [www.BrandSpark.com](http://www.BrandSpark.com).

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