

# APEX Influencer Report



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## Pat McNamara

President, APEX Public Relations

As a public relations agency we hear a lot about new trends. Not surprisingly, there's been much talk about the emerging prevalence of what is now not-so-new media — blogs, wikis, podcasts, and social networking sites. These revolutionary up and comers are touted as the new heirs to the media throne, soon to unseat the long-held reign of television, radio and traditional advertising. Yet our research illustrates popularity and credibility are not synonymous and that traditional media remain the most trusted among consumers.

Every year, new studies have been conducted about the growth of these new media, but few focus on how trusted and credible they are among the audience that counts the most, consumers. We decided to cut through the clutter and go straight to the source to find out what they really think. APEX partnered with Leger Marketing to conduct a unique audit of Canadian media credibility. The *APEX Influencer Report* is the first ever Canadian research study to focus on determining the most credible and influential media sources when making purchasing decisions.

The results? More than a decade after experts predicted online media would lead to the demise of television and newspapers, traditional forms of media remain the most credible sources of information to Canadians. We learned that television, by far, remains the most trusted media source in the country; that younger audiences lend greater credence to blogs and podcasts than do boomers; that industry experts are far more credible than celebrities; and much more.

In addition to making headlines for its groundbreaking discoveries, The *APEX Influencer Report* allows us to deliver to our clients the real, up-to-date views of the public, identifying who it trusts and how it wants to be engaged. The data emerging from the study has been an invaluable tool, allowing us to direct our clients to the strategic avenues best suited to their objectives. It has allowed us to explore new territory, discard old myths, and verify new assumptions.

Our *APEX Influencer Report* offers a snapshot of the study. We invite you to discuss with us how we can help you engage your target audience and solidify your relationship with it.

Contact me at [pmcnamara@apexpr.com](mailto:pmcnamara@apexpr.com). Your thoughts are always welcome.

## Don't Touch That Dial

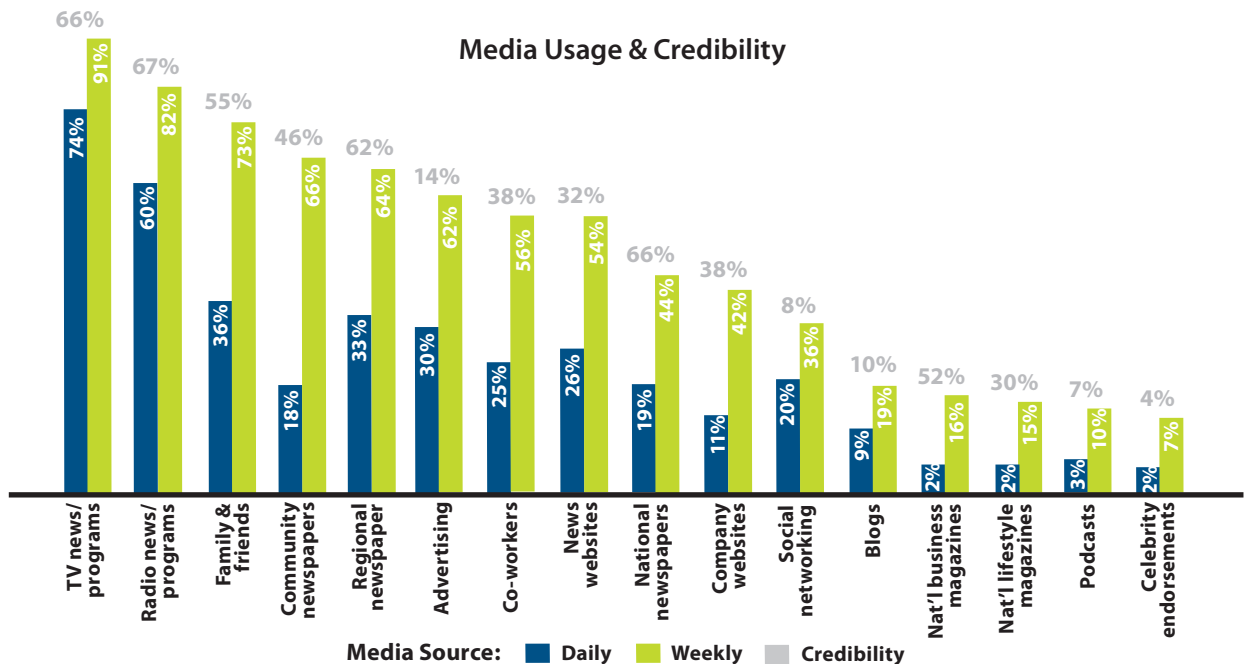
More than a decade after experts predicted online media would lead to the demise of television and newspapers, traditional forms of media remain the most credible sources of information to Canadians.

- 91 per cent of Canadians are turning on the tube at least once a week.
- 82 per cent are tuning in to radio air waves.
- Both television and radio were ranked as the most credible media sources, followed closely by regional and national newspapers.
- The friends and family grapevine ranks third in credibility.

If you think Facebook is the final frontier, think again. No doubt, consumers are infatuated with the new social networking star, but when it comes to who they trust and access the most, tried and true traditional media still hold their hearts. APEX *Influencer Report* research indicates the percentage of consumers who think what they read on social networking sites is credible, is still in the single digits. However, social networking messages pack a more powerful punch among the young demographic.

- One in three Canadians visit social networking sites at least once a week.
- While ranked low on the credibility scale, online networks are where consumers congregate to discuss their likes and dislikes.
- Company websites top the credibility charts for five major industry groups and they are often consumers' first stop in their information quest.

It's no secret that there are more information options than ever before. It's clear that if we want to communicate with the public we need to understand where they get their information and how they are making decisions. We can't abandon traditional media, but we also need to understand that it's becoming increasingly vital to talk to audiences through multiple channels.



## Goodbye Britney Spears, Hello Industry Insider

Tennis bombshell Maria Sharapova might be the pretty face behind many of today's digital products, but it's the learned expertise of the local tech geek that's influencing consumers' decisions.

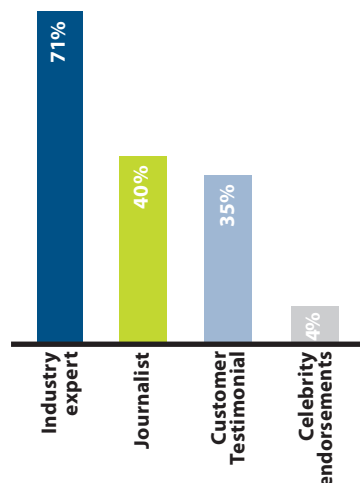
Data extracted from the *APEX Influencer Report* shows that more than 70 per cent of Canadian consumers are influenced by industry experts, making them more influential than journalists and even celebrities. In fact, only four per cent of consumers say they would be swayed by a celebrity's opinion.

Second to industry expert appeal, journalist endorsements are also important in consumer purchasing decisions. The report reveals that 40 per cent of Canadians are likely or very likely to be influenced by a journalist's endorsement, with Quebecers more susceptible to media opinions than consumers in other provinces.

At APEX we believe that although celebrities rank low on the credibility scale, celebrity culture is still alive and still attracts attention. Once consumers are engaged, it's the industry expert's profound knowledge that will convince them of a product's virtue.

- Though only four per cent of Canadians say they are swayed by celebrity endorsements, ask the Live 8 crew and they'll tell you, celebrity sells.
- We've come a long way from the days of Woodward and Bernstein; journalists' credibility has faltered — only 40 per cent say they trust reporters.
- 71 per cent of consumers trust industry experts, so brush up on your public speaking and consider some media training for your executives.

What Influences the Consumer





**Jo Langham**  
Senior Vice President

As the head of APEX's FRESH! division, Jo's focus is on the food and beverage, and beer, wine and spirits industries. She knows what it takes to keep her clients' products flying off the shelves.

**I'll have what she's having: Word of mouth gets the biggest piece of credibility pie**

*"Nobody makes apple pie like mom." "The only way to eat cookies is with milk, just like I did when I was a kid." "Isn't that the great Chardonnay we had at Susie's last week?" "Look, there's the restaurant my sister said she loved..."*

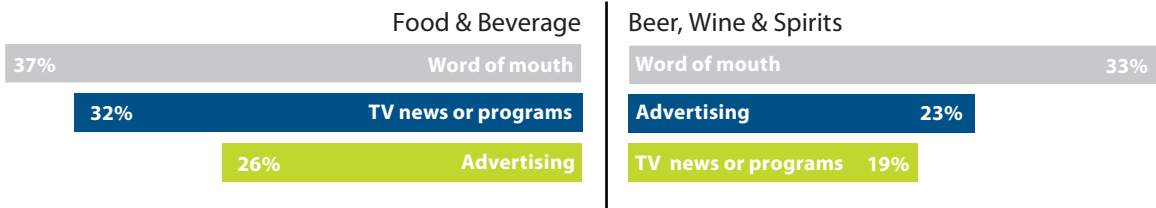
When it comes to what we eat and drink, consumers most often rely on the opinions of friends and family when making food and beverage purchases.

The APEX *Influencer Report* found word of mouth is the most trusted source of information related to food, beverages and alcohol. Almost one in five respondents said they trust their friends and family the most when seeking information about this category. Those consumers also gravitate toward television news shows and programs because of the timely nature of the information, but are somewhat wary they might not always be the most credible sources.

When promoting these products, marketers should consider this food for thought:

- Word of mouth is what public relations does best. From product reviews in a foodie's column, to the media relations buzz after a consumer event and a podcast for wine enthusiasts, consumers get an ongoing diet of food and beverage "gossip" to pass along.
- Expert spokesperson or celebrity promoter? In today's food arena both are acceptable – but for their message to ring true with consumers, celebrities must have a credible reason for being able to talk nutrition.
- Dieticians in the media and regular food columnists are holding brands to high nutritional standards. Public relations can tell the story behind nutrition credentials, including research and supporting trends that will give substance to the commercial that just aired.

**Most Trusted & Used Sources**





**Erin Hardy**  
Vice President

Erin manages the agency's fashion and beauty practice. She has helped some of Canada's best known beauty brands soar to the top of this competitive industry.

## Media 101: How to Stay “En Vogue” with Consumers

In the ever-changing world of fashion and beauty, with its seasonal trends and must-have looks, it's a relief to discover that one thing remains en vogue — consumers turn to lifestyle magazines for their fashion and beauty 411.

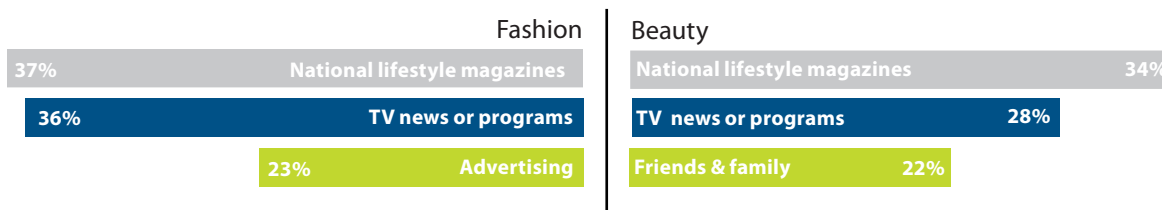
According to the APEX *Influencer Report*, almost half of Canadians between the ages of 35 and 44 refer to national lifestyle magazines for fashion news and advice. On a proportional basis, no other age bracket uses this source more. In addition to national lifestyle magazines, Canadians turn to television news and programs, advertising, and friends and family for their fashion and beauty updates.

While lifestyle magazines are Canadians' top choice for all their fashion and beauty information, the television is also a credible media source. Due to their frequent exposure, television news and programs ranked high in credibility, as did advice from friends and family.

Maintaining a brand's exposure in the fashion and beauty market is crucial in an industry that is constantly evolving, and in which consumers are eager to get the latest information about trends. What is the best way to achieve credible exposure for your brand when thousands upon thousands of fashion and beauty products are vying for attention?

- As lifestyle magazines are the top choice for fashion and beauty information, it would be wise to direct resources to this medium when trying to build exposure for a brand or product.
- For more trendy and time-sensitive products, television may be the best medium to reach a mass consumer audience as it provides real-time information.
- It's crucial to present all information in a stimulating format and to make it appear credible. Positive reviews and customer testimonials help increase the credibility of your information among readers.

### Most Trusted & Used Sources





**Ken Evans**  
Vice President  
Ken manages APEX's corporate group. As the leading facilitator of the media training practice, Ken has helped countless executives make the most of their face time with the public.

## Magazines and Newspapers: A Good Investment

Money. We all want it. We strive to earn more or plan ways to get rich quick. But in a world where people would rather talk openly about their love lives than their bank account statements, how can companies influence Canadians' investing and banking decisions?

Just like investing in the stock market, there's no magic bullet answer. But the *APEX Influencer Report* found consumers' age, gender, and income have a significant impact on where they choose to gather banking and investment information.

Traditional media sources, such as national business magazines and newspapers, trumped blogs and podcasts as the most trusted sources of information. However, a higher proportion of men use national business magazines and newspapers for investment information while women tend to gravitate toward family and friends.

Household income also affects where consumers choose to gather information. The study found higher income households turn to national business magazines and newspapers for investment information.

When it comes to banking advice, Canadians have cited company websites as their most trusted information source. More than half of Canadians use this tool for research prior to purchasing a financial institution's product or service.

So what can marketers bank on when trying to reach out to Canadians?

- If you're looking to bolster your credibility among consumers, you're best to concentrate your efforts on national newspaper and business magazines, which rank as the most *trusted* sources for investment information.
- To communicate information about basic banking, your own website is the best place to start.
- If you want to target women, you just can't beat the grapevine. Women tend to rely on word of mouth recommendations from friends and family.

### Most Trusted & Used Sources



## Consumers Flock to Company Websites for the Real Deal

The digital age has exploded in our homes, our offices and even in our pockets. From furniture and appliances to books and cell phone accessories, millions of Canadians have made an online purchase or carried out product research on the web. But with so many online sources, what's the best way to reach and influence Canadians' purchasing decisions?

The answer is closer to home than most companies realize. The APEX *Influencer Report* found Canadians trust company websites the most for information on specific consumer electronics, with more than half citing they use a company website as a research tool prior to making a purchase. Interestingly, the study also found a strong link between education levels and the gathering of information from company websites. As respondents' education level increased, so did their use of company websites for consumer electronic information.

Here's some information to mull over when trying to digitally hone in on your target:

- Company websites are the number one choice for consumers seeking information on electronics or automobiles.
- The majority of company website believers are young, tech-savvy individuals who tend to be early adopters of new products. Be sure to appeal to their multimedia preferences.
- Because of their popularity, company websites should be continually revisited and refreshed by marketers.
- Maintain the credibility of your website by making sure information such as pricing and features are up to date.
- Companies should include interactive components on their websites, such as blogs, podcasts and message boards in order to create a sense of community and foster online word of mouth.

### Most Trusted & Used Sources

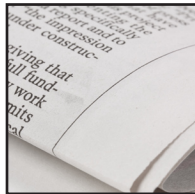
#### Consumer Electronics



**Linda Andross**  
Executive  
Vice President

Overseeing the technology practice, Linda has brought the digital age to clients throughout the agency, while still trying to be low tech herself (no Blackberry please!)

## The Last Word



Traditional media are alive and well



Word of mouth is more than just gossip



Facebook is a phenomenon, not a phase



The "*celebrity factor*" entertains, but has limited credibility



Company websites are an untapped opportunity

## **APEX Public Relations Inc.**

At APEX Public Relations, we work in partnership with our clients to provide smart, creative communications solutions. We deliver results that matter to their business and their reputation. Owner-managed and staffed by senior level professionals with extensive hands-on experience, APEX is the resource for organizations seeking creative and professional communications support. We specialize in marketing public relations, corporate and employee communications, advanced technology and issues management.

Clients like us for what we call the “APEX Attitude” — our enthusiasm, flexibility and total focus on client needs and results. We listen to them, use their products and services, talk to customers and constantly monitor the competition. The better we know our clients, the better our service.

**IABC/Toronto’s Agency of the year in 2007 and 2008**

APEX Public Relations continually monitors trends to ensure we build our clients’ exposure to the public and help their brands establish strong relationships with consumers.

To learn more about APEX and how we can help your business grow, please contact:

**Pat McNamara, APR, President APEX Public Relations Inc.**  
**600-1075 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M5S 2B1, 416-924-4442 ext. 222**  
**[www.apexpr.com](http://www.apexpr.com)**

## **Leger Marketing**

Leger Marketing was founded 20 years ago and has offices in Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Philadelphia, Tampa and Denver. Leger Marketing is the leading Canadian-owned market research and public opinion firm. It has obtained “Gold Seal” certification from the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA).

**[www.legermarketing.com](http://www.legermarketing.com)**

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