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**PRESS RELEASE
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16th ANNUAL BRAND KEYS 2012 CUSTOMER LOYALTY INDEX SURVEY CONFIRMS CONSUMERS' DESIRE FOR POSITIVE BRAND EXPERIENCES

**"Brand" Image Continues To Escalate as Consumers Search for
Meaningful Experiences with Products and Services**

NEW YORK, NY (February 6, 2012) – Survey data increasingly documents brands' growing need to "delight" consumers if they are to cement customer loyalty.

The discovery of a "Decade of Delight," which describes consumers' key brand expectation was the critical finding in last year's annual Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Engagement Index® (CLEI) conducted by the New York-based brand and customer loyalty and engagement consultancy (www.brandkeys.com). In 2012, evidence continues to mount that it is indeed "delight" that defines the consumer landscape with brands.

Methodology

For the Brand Keys 2012 survey, 49,000 consumers, 18 to 65 years of age, drawn from the nine US Census Regions, self-selected the categories in which they are consumers, and the brands for which they are customers. Seventy-five percent (75%) were interviewed by phone, twenty percent (20%) via face-to-face interviews (to account for today's population, who are cell phone-only consumers) and the remaining consumers assessed categories and brands online.

Assessments are based on an independently-validated technique that fuses rational and emotional aspects of the categories to identify category drivers for the Ideal, and determines how well the brands meet – even exceed – expectations consumers hold for the Ideal in that particular category.

The technique is a combination of psychological inquiry and higher-order statistical analyses, has a test/re-test reliability of 0.93, and has been used in B2B and B2C categories in 35 countries around the world.

Five new categories were added to the 2012 survey, bringing the CLEI assessments up to 83 categories and 598 brands. The new categories in this year's survey are:

1. Tablets, which includes the brands: Apple, Samsung, Amazon
2. Video Streaming Websites, which includes the brands: Hulu, YouTube, Netflix

3. Packaged Coffee, which includes the brands: Dunkin, Starbucks, Green Mountain
4. Packaged Ice Cream, which includes the brands: Haagen Dazs, Ben & Jerry's, Breyers
5. Major League (Online) Gaming, which includes the brands: Halo, Call of Duty, Madden Football

Across the 598 brands in 83 diverse categories surveyed in the January 2012, attributes relating to "experience" and "brand values" in products and services exert the strongest impact on customer decision-making, category-expectations, and engagement with brands.

While expectation levels for delight vary by category, the top-20 brands, best at creating customer delight, are:

1. Apple (tablets)
2. Apple (smartphones)
3. Amazon (e-retailer)
4. Kindle (e-reader)
5. Facebook (social networks)
6. Hyundai (automotive)
7. Samsung (cellphones)
8. Discover (credit cards)
9. YouTube (video streaming)
10. Google (search engine)
11. Call of Duty (gaming)
12. Mary Kay (cosmetics)
13. McDonald's (quick-serve food)
14. Haagen Dazs (packaged ice cream)
15. Patron (tequila)
16. Grey Goose (vodka)
17. Crest Whitestrips (tooth whiteners)
18. Walgreen's (drug stores)
19. Clairol (hair color)
20. AT&T (wireless phone service)

As Brand Keys saw last year, consumer expectations have been accelerating for some time. Many industry pundits have looked at the pressures on price and drawn the erroneous conclusion that brands have lost their value.

Quite the opposite is true.

Real brands are more valuable than ever. We need only look to the continuing success of luxury brands as evidence. Brands that lack meaning and differentiation are punished by the economic and behavioral shifts. Such brands have become 'category placeholders', a space closer to commodities than brand, and of one thing you can be sure, consumers do not look for commodities in their search for delight.

Brands that Delight the Consumer

Brands that received the highest loyalty and engagement assessments for 2012 and are "delighting" their customers better than competitors are:

Airlines: Continental
Allergy Medicine (OTC): Claritin
Athletic Footwear: Asics
Automotive: Hyundai
Banks: JPMorgan Chase
Beer (Light): Sam Adams Light
Beer (Regular): Coors and Sam Adams
Blu-Ray Players: Samsung
Breakfast Cereal (Adult): Cheerios
Breakfast Cereal (Children): Frosted Flakes
Car Insurance: Allstate
Car Rental: Avis
Casual Dining: Ruby Tuesday
Cell Phones: Samsung
Coffee: Dunkin' Donuts
Computer (Laptop): Apple
Computer (Netbook): Acer and Samsung
Cosmetics (Luxury): Clinique
Cosmetics: Mary Kay
Credit Card: Discover
Credit Card (Banks): Chase
Diapers: Pampers
Digital SLR Camera: Canon
Digital Point-and-Shoot Camera: Canon
Drug Stores: Walgreens
Energy Provider (Chicago): Peoples Gas
Energy Provider (Houston): Reliant
Energy Provider (Los Angeles): Southern California Gas
Energy Provider (New York): PECO
E-Readers: Kindle
Evening News Show: NBC
Facial Moisturizer (Luxury): Elizabeth Arden
Facial Moisturizer: L'Oréal
Flat Screen TV: Samsung
Gasoline: Shell
Hair Color: Clairol
Hair Conditioners: Pantene
Hair Shampoo: Breck and Pantene
Hotel (Luxury): Inter-Continental
Hotel (Upscale): Hilton
Hotel (Mid-Scale): Best Western
Hotel (Economy): Days Inn
Insurance Company: Aetna
IT Solutions Provider: IBM
Laundry Detergent: Tide
Major League Gaming: Call of Duty - Modern Warfare
Major Sports League: Major League Baseball
Multifunctional Office Copier: Konica Minolta and Canon
Morning News Show: Today (NBC)
Movie Rentals: Blockbuster
Mutual Fund: Vanguard

Online Brokerage: Options Xpress and Scottrade.com
Online Retailer: Amazon.com
Online Travel: Expedia
Packaged Coffee: Dunkin' and Starbucks
Packaged Ice Cream: Ben & Jerry's and Haagen Dazs
Pain Reliever (OTC): Advil
Paper Towels: Bounty
Parcel Delivery: UPS
Pasta Sauce: Barilla
Pet Food - Canned (Cats): Purina
Pet Food - Canned (Dogs): Purina One
Pizza: Domino's and Papa John's
Printers: Canon
Quick-Serve Restaurant: McDonald's and Subway
Retail Price Club: Costco
Retail (Apparel): Abercrombie and Fitch
Retail (Discount): Wal-Mart
Retail (Department Store): Dillard's
Retail (Office Supply): Office Depot
Retail (Home Improvement): Ace
Search Engine: Google
Smartphone: Apple
Social Networking Sites: Facebook
Soft Drink (Diet): Diet Coke
Soft Drink (Regular): Coke
Tablets: Apple
Tequila: Patron
Toothpaste: Colgate
Tooth Whiteners: Crest Whitestrips
Video Streaming: YouTube
Vodka: Grey Goose
Wireless Phone Service: AT&T Wireless

Consumers Change, Categories Change – Brands Must Change Too

The CLEI data actually predicts emerging trends in the consumer marketplace. Every category we can compare to last year, shows a rise in either importance or increased expectations when it comes to the brand-based attributes that most strongly impact the customer experience. In short, things that generate delight.

Given the levels of commoditization we've witnessed in product/services and pricing/promotion strategies, it's no surprise consumers are looking to strong brands to offer a difference. Consumers know the brands, know what they do, and know what they're willing to pay for them. Satisfaction has never been more cost-of-entry while delight is the new differentiator.

Experience is key, whether it's experience with products themselves, or how products are put into the hands of consumers – from rapid delivery to product introductions – including the after-life of service and support that the consumer experiences. Consumers want a higher level of experience.

This year consumers' skyrocketing desire for experience and authentic brand values are exerting the strongest impact on customer decision-making and profitable engagement with brands. Brands that are able to meet, or to exceed, these expectations become category leaders.

This only matters, of course, if marketers keep score by counting sales and profits, not by merely tracking awareness levels, numbers of tweets, or levels of buzz.

Brands that Delight the Consumer

At a time when brands are struggling to differentiate themselves and to find ways to profitably engage customers, the changes in this year's Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Engagement Index serve as a benchmark for marketers. Products and services that respond with a meaningful consumer-centric view of their category – delighting the customer – based on predictive loyalty metrics, stand to gain the most, and establish themselves as this decade's brand leaders.

The complete listing of the 83 category rankings can be found at <http://www.brandkeys.com/syndicated-studies/customer-loyalty-engagement-index/>

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