



Brand Keys

Independence Day 2013: Which Brands Are Most Patriotic?

With July 4th soon upon us, many marketers are readying to wrap their brands in the American flag and cue the marching bands. As part of a larger brand values survey, Brand Keys did a statistical “drill-down” to identify which of 197 brands were more associated with the value of “patriotism.” Many emotional engagement values drive overall brand engagement, so consumers evaluated 35 of them. But since marketers – domestic and foreign – traditionally operate on the “Independence Day Marketing Approach,” i.e., a patriotic, flag-waving, call-to-emotion will motivate consumers, we wanted to see which brands actually led when it came patriotism.

Brand Keys are great believers in the concept that *saying* it and *being* it are two entirely different things when it comes to engaging the consumer. Slapping an American flag on something and actually having an authentic foundation for being *able* to slap an American flag on something are different and the consumer knows it. More importantly, they act upon that knowledge. Percentages indicate emotional engagement strength for the single, *individual* value of “patriotism” the brand gets credit for.

A	U.S. Armed Forces ¹	100% ¹
1	Jeep	98%
2	Hershey's/Coca-Cola	97%
3	Levi Strauss/Disney	95%
4	Colgate	94%
5	Zippo	93%
6	Wrigley's	92%
7	Ralph Lauren	91%
8	Kodak/Gillette	90%
9	New Balance/Harley-Davidson	89%
10	Budweiser/Marlboro	88%
11	Ford	86%
12	Louisville Slugger/Smith & Wesson	85%
13	GE	84%
14	John Deere/L.L. Bean	82%
15	Walmart	81%
16	Craftsman Tools/ Wilson Sporting Goods/Sears/Wrangler	80%
17	Campbell's/McDonald's/Gibson	79%

¹ Although this was a survey of for-profit brands, we were curious about to see how the most patriotic of patriotic brands, the United States armed services, rated. The Coast Guard, Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy were all included in the study and, each showed up top of the list.

18	49ers/Cowboys/Patriots/NFL/Playboy/Yankees	78%
19	AT&T/Caterpillar/Goodyear/Maytag/Whirlpool	77%
20	Coors/Jack Daniels/Heinz/Kellogg's	76%
21	GM	75%
22	General Mills/KFC/Kraft	74%
23	Dr. Pepper/Gatorade	73%
24	Mobil/P&G/Tide	70%

If you've observed a genuine and consonant thematic when it comes to patriotism and brands, you wouldn't be wrong. And based on the results it seems manifest and reasonably arguable that the brands that showed up in the top-50, could each be called an 'American Icon' in the category in which they compete.

Nota Bene: All this is not to say that other brands are not patriotic, or that they don't possess any patriotic resonance. They do. Rational aspects like *being* an American company, or really being "Made in the USA," or having Nationally-directed CSR activities and sponsorships – all play a part in the total make-up of any brand, generally, and as it regards its patriotic nature and public face specifically. But if you want to meaningfully differentiate via a brand value, especially an emotional value, if there's believability via strong emotional engagement, good marketing just gets better.

Another thing the past couple of decades has taught us is brands that make that kind of connection *always* have a strategic advantage over competitors when it come to the marketplace battle for the hearts, minds, and loyalty of consumers.