B k R e A y N s D

Dead Brands Walking…
The Least Engaging Brands of 2014

Blackberry, Quiznos and Kmart Top the Bottom of Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Index

NEW YORK, NY, March 10, 2014 – "A brand can't do well in today's marketplace if it can't engage consumers, no matter how many ads are run, and no matter how much social networking one does," said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, Inc. (www.brandkeys.com), a New York-based brand loyalty and emotional engagement research consultancy.

"Brand engagement correlates very highly with positive consumer behavior, sales, and profits. All you have to do is look and see how the brand is doing in the marketplace to confirm customer assessments," added Passikoff.

Brand engagement – defined as the degree to which a brand is seen to meet the expectations consumers hold for the Ideal in the category – is a leading-indicator of positive consumer behavior and brand loyalty. They are the ultimate measure for the brand, "which should always be the beneficiary of any marketing or advertising effort," said Passikoff. "People can be engaged with a show or a social network or an event or an experience, but those are *methods* of engagement. Brand engagement is the ultimate goal."

By examining how well 64 brands – each at the bottom of their respective categories in the 2014 Brand Keys Customer Loyalty Engagement Index – did at meeting those expectations for their Ideal (100%), Brand Keys identified the 10 least engaging brands for 2014. From the lowest level of engagement, brands ranked as follows:

1. Blackberry 52%
2. Quiznos 57%
3. Kmart 59%
4. Sony (e-readers) 60%
5. WOW search engine 60%
6. Sears (64%)
7. American Apparel 65%
8. Budweiser (regular) 70%
9. Coty Cosmetics (71%)
10. Volkswagen (79%)

"Brands compete in specific categories," noted Passikoff. "By seeing how well customers think a brand measures up to meeting their Ideal retailer, or beer, or smartphone, allows for cross-category rankings like these." Numerous validation studies have proven that the benchmark for brand success is something higher than 85%. "Below that, you are generally looking at a brand in trouble."

"Where engagement is high consumers behave better toward a brand and the brand sees more sales and, along with that, should also see increased share and profits. Where engagement is low, the reverse happens," noted Passikoff. "Always."

Methodology

For the Brand Keys 2014 survey, 32,000 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 (top-20%). Seventy percent (70%) were interviewed by phone, twenty-five percent (25%) via face-to-face interviews (to include cell phone-only households), and 5% participated online.

Assessments are based on an independently-validated research technique that fuses rational and emotional aspects of the categories to identify the behavioral drivers for each category-specific Ideal. The Ideal describes a precise path-to-purchase, describing how the consumer will *view* the category, how they will *compare* brands and, ultimately how they will *engage with the brand, buy, and remain loyal*. Then the assessments measure how well the brands own customers see the brand meeting expectations consumers hold for the Ideal (100%) for a specific category.

The proprietary research technique combines psychological inquiry with higher-order statistical analyses to deliver a verified test/re-test reliability of 0.93, with results generalizable at the 95% confidence level. It has been successfully used in B2B and B2C categories in 35 countries around the world.

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