


# Brands Face Loyalty, Engagement Shifts

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- by [Tanya Gazdik](#) , 8 hours ago



It's not business as usual for the world's biggest brands, as political polarization and viral social movements have changed engagement and brand loyalty, according to a study.

Brand Keys's "[2019 Customer Loyalty Engagement Index](#)" reveals that 94% of categories are seeing value changes in how consumers engage. However, Facebook, AT&T, Discover, Dunkin' Donuts, Domino's Pizza, Amazon, Avis Rent a Car, Konica Minolta and Hyundai Motor America maintain dominance in their respective categories.

"This is an extraordinary time for brands," says Robert Passikoff, president of Brand Keys. "I've never seen these kinds of paradigm shifts for brands."

Researchers expected some categories to adapt to market conditions, technological advances, and more obvious shifts in customer expectations. Most market research and monitors generally lag behind even those more apparent benefits and options.

"It's only going to get harder for marketers," Passikoff tells *Marketing Daily*. "The values that are making themselves felt are being driven by political tribalism and much higher orders of social activism that are driving tenets and principles related to moral order, family values, empathy, and pride into categories where such influences are both new and unexplored by brands."

A new "engagement paradigm" has created engagement opportunities for Dropbox,

WhatsApp, Dollar General, Spotify, Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, Bugles, Instagram and Chapstick.

"The most notable of the findings is how quickly these value-swings modified categories," he says. "New political and social values — in addition to the 'normal' category alterations one might expect — entered the brandscape and significantly affected 79 of 84 very diverse categories. That equates to massive shifts in category path-to-purchase drivers for 94% of the sectors we look at."

Political polarization and viral social movements like #grabyourwallet, #MeToo, and #TimesUp have dramatically changed the face of brand engagement and consumer loyalty, according to the New York-based brand engagement and customer loyalty research consultancy.

"I think it's too early to see brands adjusting their marketing to meet new consumer values and expectations," he says. "But what is crystal clear is, based on the most recent quantitative research, brands that managed to maintain their category engagement and loyalty leadership are meeting consumer expectations better than the competition. Brands like Hyundai, Discover Card, Konica Minolta, and Domino's have always managed to identify meaningful 'tent pole' values and communicate them in engaging ways."

The study examined 84 categories and 761 brands — from Automotive and OTC medications to Computers, Fast-Casual Dining, Tax Preparation and Online Investing, Retailing, Smartphones, Cable and Broadcast News, and Alcoholic Beverages.

How consumers view a category, and how they compare competing brands, changed dramatically in 94% of the measured categories. That shift resulted in brand engagement and loyalty transformation and an accompanying shift in brand leadership of 58%.

Brand Keys uses an independently validated research methodology that fuses emotional and rational aspects of categories, identifies four leading path-to-purchase behavioral drivers for the category-specific "ideal," and identifies the values that form the components of each driver. Assessments are leading-indicators of consumer behavior, identifying activities 12 to 18 months *before* they show up in traditional brand tracking surveys.

"I believe that we're entering a new 'age' of marketing, something akin to what brands had to face at the advent of the 'digital' age," he says. "The only difference is that what's down the road is going to be coming at brands much, much faster. I think that it's likely that social networking and digital outreach in new and different forms and forums are going to be critical for brands that want to both adapt and leverage these new consumer values."