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Does Trump Have A Brand, Beyond Politics?

Survey Finds President Loses Consumer Brand Mojo

NEW YORK, NY October 22, 2018 – When it comes to politics, President Trump is ‘one of the most powerful political brands in the world,’ according to a new national survey by New York-based brand research firm, Brand Keys, Inc. (www.brandkeys.com).

“When it comes to areas unrelated to politics,” noted Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys’ president, “Not so much anymore.”

Last week, condominium owners on New York’s West Side had the name ‘TRUMP PLACE’ removed from their building. They, as many others, licensed the right to use the Trump name in 2000 when the brand resonated with values like ‘luxury,’ ‘wealth,’ ‘comfort,’ and ‘lavish lifestyles.’ “Tastes haven’t changed,” said Passikoff, “What the Trump brand stands for has – dramatically!”

‘Human Brands’ like Mr. Trump are people who are seen to be the living embodiments of values they successfully, seamlessly, and profitably transfer to products and services. “For 30 years Mr. Trump had been one of the most powerful brands we’ve tracked,” said Passikoff. “We’re hesitant to call him a ‘brand’ anymore, not in the traditional marketing sense of the word, anyway. Brands operate differently in the political arena than they do in the consumer marketplace and it’s difficult for one brand to operate successfully in both simultaneously.”

“Prior to his election, and even shortly thereafter, you could add the Trump name to virtually anything and the perceived value of the product would increase upwards of 30 percent. The most celebrated of celebrities generally adds 12-15 percent value to

products or services to which they lend their names. Trump was a superstar. But not any more.”

Methodology

One thousand, five hundred (1,500) Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, drawn from the nine U.S. Census Regions, participated in a national study conducted by Brand Keys the week of September 29th 2018, examining seven categories where Brand Keys traditionally tracks the Trump brand.

But, Passikoff noted, “As Mr. Trump concentrated his efforts in the political arena, measuring Trump-branded products in the marketplace has become more difficult, confounded by Political Tribalism and Social Activism.”

Three years ago it appeared that more than 20 companies were paying Mr. Trump to distribute or produce Trump-branded products. “Now you’re hard pressed to find anything beyond MAGA hats, Golf Clubs, and Real Estate that resonates with the Trump brand attached, and even Real Estate has taken a beating.”

The Trump Brand Lift

Percentages below indicate the added-value currently produced by adding the Trump name. Differences of +5% is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Category	April 2015	February 2017	December 2017	October 2018
TV/Entertainment	37%	45%	32%	27%
Country/Golf Clubs	35%	51%	57%	52%
Real Estate	30%	48%	55%	40%
Hotels	31%	50%	51%	53%
Dress Shirts	30%	27%	15%	2%
Ties	29%	19%	8%	1%
Suits	20%	8%	5%	2%

“Whether Mr. Trump is currently involved in all these categories or not,” noted Passikoff, “The significant decline in the *perception* of his added brand value is a harbinger of the strength of the Trump brand. The only categories currently holding up are Country Clubs and Hotels, most of which are monetized more by political pull and Presidential access, á la the GOP and evangelical Christian groups, than brand pull.

“We know these brand engagement numbers always correlate very highly with consumer behavior,” said Passikoff. “For example, Ivanka Trump had to shutter her namesake fashion brand this July. In September it was reported that with a booming economy and tourism on the rise, revenues at four New York City-based concessions run by the Trump Organization are down or flat. The Trump name was removed from what was the then-Trump Soho hotel, and sales at Trump Tower have slowed, reflecting a significant drop in Trump brand equity in that sector (-15%). “None of this is an accident,” said Passikoff. “It’s a signal the Trump brand has lost its mojo.”

In 2015 the famous Central Park carousel earned more than \$188,000 in profit. Now revenue is \$30,000, down 84%. In May the sign reading ‘Trump Carousel’ was taken down.

“Good move,” commented Passikoff.

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