

New Brand Keys report reveals attributes defining loyalty

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By [Bulldog Reporter](#) on October 13th, 2017 | [0 Comments](#)

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Digital technology and social networking brands—and brands that facilitate digital tech or social networking—represent more than a third (36 percent) of the *2017 Loyalty Leaders List* in the 21st annual survey conducted by [brand and customer loyalty](#) and engagement research consultancy [Brand Keys](#).

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“Digital brands represent the lion’s share of this year’s list once again, also commanding the most spots among the top 20 Loyalty Leaders to make up 70 percent of that portion of the 2017 Loyalty Leaders,” said [Robert Passikoff](#), Brand Keys founder and president, in a news release. “Not surprisingly a number of digital brands show up as Loyalty Leaders in multiple categories.”

2017 Top Loyalty Leaders in digital

The list shows actual rankings among the 2017 top 100 Loyalty Leaders as well as [loyalty growth or erosion](#) represented by movement up or down the list.

Brand	Category	2017 Ranking	2016 Ranking
Amazon	Online Retail	1	2
Google	Search Engines	2	1
Apple	Tablets	3	3
Netflix	Video Streaming	4	4
Apple	Smartphones	5	6
Amazon	Video Streaming	6	9
Samsung	Smartphones	7	14
Facebook	Social Networking	8	5
Amazon	Tablets	9	7
YouTube	Social Networking	10	8
Dunkin' Donuts	Coffee	11	13
Nike	Athletic Footwear	12	15
Trader Joes	Natural Foods	13	37
WhatsApp	Instant Messaging	14	10
iTunes	Video Streaming	15	11
Hyundai	Automotive	16	22
Starbucks	Coffee	17	18
Ford	Automotive	18	16
PayPal	Online Payments	19	12
Domino's	Pizza	20	43
Instagram	Social Networking	21	27
Apple	Computers	22	29
LinkedIn	Social Networking	23	19
Zappos	Online Retail	24	20
Avis	Car Rental	25	33
Toyota	Automotive	26	36
iTunes	Online Music	27	34
Discover	Credit Cards	28	56
Ralph Lauren	Apparel Retailers	29	24
Twitter	Social Networking	30	23
Airbnb	Hotels	31	52
Chick-fil-A	Fast Casual Restaurants	32	50
Jeep	Automotive	33	59
HBO GO	Video Streaming	34	63
eBay	Online Retail	35	64
Uber	Rideshare	36	17

Digital brands resonate

“It appears that digital brands resonate better and create higher levels of [emotional engagement](#)—the ability for a brand to be perceived as meeting consumers’ expectations for their Ideal in the brands’ category. Today emotional engagement is the predictive, real-world yardstick for loyalty, market share, and profitability,” said Passikoff. “Want to know what consumers are *going to do*? Measure consumer loyalty and emotional engagement and you can know for sure.”

Category loyalty leaders. Digital and. . .

For 2017, Brand Keys examined 740 brands in 83 categories. Digital technology, social networking brands had the most Loyalty Leader brands, 36 percent of the 2017 list, up 2 percent YOY. But other categories were well-represented by Loyalty Leader brands, including:

- Retail: 16 percent
- Automotive/Auto Rental/Ride Share: 12 percent
- Restaurants: 9 percent
- Financial: 8 percent
- Cosmetics: 7 percent
- Alcohol: 7 percent
- TV News: 2 percent

Seven new brands replace seven old brands

“This year seven of the top 100 Loyalty Leaders are new. Two more than last year,” said Passikoff. “They seem to have joined the list in category-pairs.” Two represented the TV News category: FOX (#47) and MSNBC (#58). Another two represented Restaurants: Shake Shack (#99) and 5 Guys Burgers & Fries (#100). Two were automotive-related: GEICO (#88) and Lyft (#95), and one brand, Zara (#89), replaced two retailers that fell out of the top 100, GAP and J. Crew. Other brands that slipped from the top 100 included: Burt’s Bees, Chipotle, Google + and, PacSun.

2017’s biggest loyalty winners

Loyalty and emotional engagement are leading indicators of future consumer behavior with loyalty-driving behavior. “The better consumers behave toward a brand, the better the brand will do in the marketplace, which ultimately shows up on brands’ bottom lines,” added Passikoff.. This year the five brands that showed the greatest loyalty leadership gains in 2017 were:

- Vanguard (+56 to #44)
- Forever 21 (+46 to #37)
- Home Depot (+39 to #45)
- Jack Daniels (+35 to #57)
- Lowes (+33 to #66)

The biggest loyalty losers

The five brands with the greatest loyalty erosion, but still maintaining a spot in the top 100 included:

- Zuprowka Vodka (-53 to #74)
- L’Oreal (-40 to #91)
- Sam’s Club (-35 to #82)
- Bose (-27 to #72)
- Under Armour (-23 to #51)

Loyalty’s bottom line

When it comes to loyalty—no matter the category—brands that understand that emotional connections can serve as surrogates for added-value will succeed. “Brands that have made loyalty and emotional engagement a strategic priority always appear high on the Loyalty Leaders List,” added Passikoff. “More importantly, they always appear at the top of consumers’ lists.”

Brand Keys Loyalty Leaders analysis was conducted in September 2017 and includes assessments from 49,168 consumers, 16 to 65 years of age, recruited from the nine US Census Regions. Respondents self-selected the categories in which they are consumers, and the brands for which they are customers. The 2017 Loyalty Leader assessments examined 83 categories and evaluated 740 brands.

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