

Loyalty Leaders “Out-innovate” Competition When It Comes to Customer Experience

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Brands that facilitate digital or social comprise more than one third (36 percent) of the 2017 Brand Keys Loyalty Leaders according to the company’s 21st annual survey.

The New York-based brand loyalty and customer engagement research consultancy examined 740 brands in 83 categories to provide an extraordinarily insightful and comprehensive, cross-category perspective of brand loyalty today.

“Over the past few years, it’s been more difficult for non-digital or non-social networking brands to increase build the kind of engagement that resonates with consumers’ emotions and builds loyalty,” said Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys founder and president. “We predicted this precise situation would force traditional brands to work harder to create the emotional connections necessary to foster loyalty. Some have worked a lot harder recently, with traditional brands actually using more digital and social outreach to boost brand loyalty.”



[Stellar Loyalty](#) CMO Narina Sippy told Loyalty360 that the top 20 brands possess a common characteristic. “The top 20 brands on the list all have one thing in common: They consistently out-innovate the competition when it comes to customer experience,” Sippy explained. “These brands are constantly switching up the experience, seeking out new and unique ways to keep customers coming back.”

For example, Sippy added: “Think of how many inventive ways Amazon has found to build-in value for its Prime Membership. Dominos jumped up 23 spots from last year, coming off big changes to its menu, services, store designs, and technology; Dunkin’ Donuts is in the top 15 because it continues to invest in customer data analysis and personalization that lets it reach its customers with more relevant, emotion-based offers and promotions. It’s this kind of relentless commitment to customer-centric innovation that defines today’s loyalty leaders.”

Here are the **2017 Top 20 Brand Keys Loyalty Leaders**
(Numbers in parentheses indicate last year’s loyalty ranking)

1. Amazon: online retail (#2)
2. Google: search engines (#1)
3. Apple: tablets (#3)
4. Netflix: video streaming (#4)
5. Apple: smartphones (#6)
6. Amazon: video streaming (#9)
7. Samsung: smartphones (#14)
8. Facebook: social networking (#5)
9. Amazon: tablets (#7)
10. YouTube: social networking (#8)
11. Dunkin’ Donuts: coffee (#13)
12. Nike: athletic footwear (#15)
13. Trader Joe’s: grocery (#37)
14. WhatsApp: instant messaging (#14)
15. iTunes: video streaming (#15)

16. Hyundai: automotive (#22)
17. Starbucks: coffee (#18)
18. Ford: automotive (#16)
19. PayPal: online payments (#12)
20. Domino's: pizza (#43)

Digital technology, social networking brands, and brands that facilitate digital and social comprised the most Loyalty Leader brands again this year. But other categories represented by Loyalty Leader brands provide an interesting picture of where consumer loyalty is centered:

- 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

“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.

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)
- Lowe’s (+33 to #66)

Conversely, the survey shows the five brands with the greatest loyalty erosion, but they still remain in the top 100:

- 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)

Brand Keys Loyalty Leaders analysis was conducted in September 2017 and includes assessments from 49,168 consumers (between the ages of 16 and 65), recruited from the nine U.S. 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.