



PRESS RELEASE

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Brand Keys 2019 Sports Loyalty Index: National Football League Moves Back Up to #1

NEW YORK, NY April 9, 2019 – According to 18,550 fans participating in the 27th annual *Sports Loyalty Index* survey conducted by Brand Keys, the New York-based brand engagement and customer loyalty research consultancy (www.brandkeys.com), the National Football League was rated #1 in fan loyalty, a return from the #2 spot the league held for the past two years.

It's critical that league marketers manage strategically to better meet fan expectations," said Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys' founder and president. "You have to know what fans *really* expect, beyond a winning season." And since league (and team) loyalty rankings correlate very highly with fans' positive behaviors, loyalty is a leading-indicator of TV viewership and product purchases.

League Loyalty Rankings

For 2019 sport league loyalty rankings are:

1. National Football League
2. Major League Baseball
3. National Basketball Association
4. National Hockey League

"All sports fans have an 'Ideal League' in mind," said Passikoff. "The league that better meets fans' very high expectations for game features and values that drive loyalty *always* sees higher TV game viewership and purchases of licensed merchandise than competitors."

What Drives League & Team Loyalty

Brand Keys' *Sports Fan Loyalty Index* was designed to help professional sports team management identify precise fan loyalty rankings "Besides win-loss ratios, there are other powerful, emotionally-based loyalty drivers that need to be taken into account when it comes to fans," noted Passikoff.

Percentages next to each loyalty driver indicate the contribution each makes to fan loyalty and league engagement (and changes from last year):

History and Tradition (29%, -1):

Is the game and the league part of fans' and community rituals, institutions, and 'tribal' beliefs?

Fan Bonding (27%, -2):

Are players particularly respected and admired?

Pure Entertainment (24%, +3):

Win-loss ratios for sure, but more importantly, how entertaining is their play? Is it a consistent experience year-to-year?

Authenticity (20%, --):

How well they play as a team. Do they seem unified? Does it involve skill *and* strategy?

Loyalty Correlates with Viewership

On a Y-O-Y basis, league viewership ratings were:

National Football League:	+ 5%
Major League Baseball:	- 4%
National Basketball Association:	-10%
National Hockey League:	-12%

"Fan loyalty ratings never lie. They're a leading-indicator of fan behavior and team profitability and are a key statistic professional sports teams should track because it always tells us what fans are going to do," said Passikoff. "And what teams they're going to watch."

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