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20th Annual *Most Innovative Brands* Survey

Direct-to-Consumer Brands Show Up For First Time

First-Time Brands Take Commanding 2023 Innovation Lead: OpenAI, Allbirds, Colgate, Warby Parker, Airbnb, Adobe, Caulipower, and Zipcar

NEW YORK, NY (June 6, 2023) – Brands named for the first time by consumers took nearly forty percent (38%) of the top-50 spots in the 2023 *Most Innovative Brands* survey conducted by Brand Keys, Inc. (www.brandkeys.com), the New York-based brand loyalty and engagement research firm. For the first time in the 20 years the survey has been conducted, consumers added a new sector, Direct-to-Consumer (D2C), indicating a significant change “in consumer perception of brand innovation leadership,” noted Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys founder and president.

Consumers Are The Ultimate Innovation Jury

These results are extraordinarily consequential. The Brand Keys annual survey is the *only* innovative brands survey based entirely on consumers’ evaluation and interpretation of innovation. “While lots of brands try to innovate,” said Passikoff, “Consumers are the ultimate jury when it comes to acknowledging and successfully adopting innovation. Brands need to recognize those expectations are the gateway to meaningful innovation.”

9 Most Innovative Sectors

A national sample of 8,120 consumers (50:50 Male/Female, 16 to 65 years of age) identified companies and brands they felt were the biggest innovators for 2023. The top 50 brands fell into nine industry sectors: Consumer Goods, D2C, Food, Healthcare, Media and Entertainment, Social Networking, Software, Technology, and Transportation.

New Innovative Brands

“The consumer perspective regarding innovation is reflected in expectations related to product, process, and culture,” noted Passikoff, facts witnessed by the immediate appearance of OpenAI in the Technology sector along with some “perennials” like Apple and Google, new innovators like Caulipower and Allbirds, and social networking brands like Instagram and TikTok.

Five (5) D2C brands were named innovators by consumers this year, including Allbirds, eco-friendly footwear, Chewy, petfood and pet-related products, Wayfair, home décor for every style and budget, and Everlane and Bonobos, ecommerce-driven clothing.

Other first-time, new brands appearing in the top 50 included Caulipower, food that's good for you, Warby Parker, prescription glasses and sunglasses, Square, digital tools for entrepreneurs, Intuit, financial software specialists, Uber, ride-hailing, and Zipcar, car-sharing.

Top 50 Most Innovative Brands

"It doesn't matter to consumers what promises are made on earnings calls, how many patents a brand holds, or their posted profits." said Passikoff. "Consumers don't view innovation that way. And while consumers can't always articulate what form they want innovation to take, a brand that can accurately measure *what* consumers emotionally expect, then *addresses* those expectations via innovation, will have an enormous advantage over the competition."

Among 9 sectors consumers acknowledged this year, brands have been ranked according to consumer evaluations regarding *their ability to meet innovation expectations*. Brands new to the 2023 *Most Innovative Brands* list appear in bold.

Consumer Goods

1. Amazon
2. Walmart
3. Dyson
4. Nike
5. Dove (Unilever)
6. **Colgate**

5. SONY

6. **Spotify**

Social Networking

1. TikTok
2. Instagram
3. **WhatsApp**
4. YouTube

Direct-to-Consumer (D2C)

1. Allbirds
2. **Chewy**
3. Wayfair
4. **Everlane**
5. **Bonobos**

Software

1. Salesforce
2. Duolingo
3. **Squarespace**
4. **Adobe**
5. Shopify
6. **Airbnb**
7. **Intuit**

Food & Beverage

1. Pringles (Kellogg's)
2. Trader Joe's
3. **Caulipower**
4. Beyond Meat
5. Coca-Cola
6. Doritos (Pepsico)

Technology

1. **OpenAI**
2. Apple
3. Samsung
4. Square
5. Google
6. Microsoft

Healthcare

1. CVS Health
2. Pfizer
3. **Warby Parker**
4. **Peloton**

Transportation

1. Ford
2. **Uber**
3. Tesla
4. Hyundai
5. **GM**
6. **Zipcar**

Media & Entertainment

1. Hulu
2. Disney
3. **MAX (HBO)**
4. Netflix

Getting A Better *Feel* For Innovation

“In order to recognize innovation, consumers need to feel it first. Brands can help them by better managing consumers’ mostly-emotional expectations. If they do that, consumers will respond positively,” noted Passikoff, “Because those expectations are the real roadmap to real brand innovation.”

“Lots of brands try to innovate,” said Passikoff, “Some more successfully than others when it comes to meeting consumers’ category-specific expectations. Great brands used to be built on products. Now they’re built on innovation.”

Brands that have been following that advice that consumers also thought were innovative included Webtoon, Casper, Fitbit, Tesla, Impossible Foods, J&J, Dropbox, WeChat, Toyota, Moderna, IBM, and Shopify.

END

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