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84% of American Consumers Look to Boycott Russian Brands, Russian Brand Purchase Intent Down 62%

86% Approve of Ban on Russian Oil, 76% Despite Hikes at Gas Pump

NEW YORK, NY (March 15, 2022) – Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has produced a humanitarian crisis and a massive backlash from multi-national brands. In a survey of 1,209 Americans conducted March 9-12, 2022 by Brand Keys (brandkeys.com), 84% of American consumers on a bi-partisan basis indicated they would boycott Russian brands as a sign of solidarity with Ukraine.

Name That (Russian) Brand

“It’s a nice sentiment, but problematic,” said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, the New York-based brand loyalty research consultancy. “The reality is there aren’t many well-known Russian brands readily evident in American stores.” Only 8% of respondents could correctly name *any* Russian consumer brands on an unaided basis. Unaided awareness was principally related to the “vodka” category, which makes up less than 1% of vodka consumption in the United States.

“The survey results demonstrate the power of branding,” noted Passikoff. “But in this instance, it’s both a blessing *and* a curse. What was once a sought-out value is now a scourge.” On an unaided basis, 95% of the brands that consumers named sounded Russian but were, in fact, brands *positioned* to evoke a Russian heritage.

For example, Smirnoff is produced in Illinois and hasn’t been a “Russian” brand for nearly 150 years. Stolichnaya is produced in Latvia (a NATO member). Zirkova isn’t Russian either. It’s a Ukrainian vodka, a brand that has pledged 100% of its profits to Ukrainian Humanitarian Appeal Funds.

Seven Russian Brands You *Can* Boycott

The annual Brand Keys *Customer Loyalty Engagement Index* includes among its 1,000-brand database eight Russian consumer brands, which appear in six industry categories: Baltika

(beer), Bosco Sport (sportswear), Faberge (luxury jewelry), Lukeoil (gasoline), and Beluga, Russian Standard, and Zyr (vodka). Respondents were *not asked* to rate Aeroflot (airlines).

Consumers who participate in those categories were asked to indicate current purchase intent for the specific Russian brands. Results were compared to similar data collected in 2018. Average cross-brand purchase intent was down 62%.

Top Two Purchase Intent
(Extremely/Very Likely To Purchase)

	2018	2022
Baltika Beer	12%	3% (-75%)
Bosco Sport	18%	4% (-79%)
Faberge	38%	21% (-47%)
Lukeoil	48%	40% (-16%)
Beluga Vodka	10%	2% (-80%)
Russian Standard vodka	9%	1% (-89%)
Zyr vodka	6%	3% (-50%)

Big Brand Boycotts

Pressure from consumers and investors have resulted in nearly 300 companies stopping or suspending business operations in Russia, including big brands like: Apple, McDonald’s, Starbucks, UPS, Goldman Sachs, Pepsico, Netflix, American Express, Sony, and Google.

Over half of Russia’s \$30 billion exports to the U.S. are gas and oil. 86% of respondents agree with a halt to buying Russian oil. Three quarters of that group (76%) felt paying more for fuel and gas was worth doing to help defend a democratic country like Ukraine. “So, President Biden’s ban on Russian oil imports and announcements by BP, Exxon, and Shell exiting Russia will have dramatic effects on the both the Russian *and* U.S. economies. Despite recent (and anticipated) increases at the gas pump and contributory spikes to inflation,” said Passikoff.

“Boycotting Russian brands available in the U.S. may not bring down the Russian economy, but it is symbolic. The thought and the deed responds to greater consumer needs; a sense of participation through collective action and a feeling of efficacy in relation to the political and humanitarian issues related to Russia’s attack on Ukraine,” noted Passikoff. “And a consumer-based boycott of brands, when combined with national policy, can be extraordinarily effective.”

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