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**Despite Record Number of Retail Bankruptcies
Retail Category Leads 2020 Loyalty Leaders List**

**Loyalty Fortifies Amazon, Home Depot, Whole Foods, CVS, Old Navy,
Dick's and Dollar Tree**

NEW YORK, NY September 21, 2020 – Since the coronavirus pandemic, 22 retailers have filed for Chapter 11. That's a total of 42 retailers this year, twice as many as 2019. But customer loyalty has protected many brands from the threat of Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings. Nineteen percent (19%) of the Top 100 brands customers evaluated – the most of any industry sector – for the 2020 loyalty Leaders List represent retailers who clearly understand the value of loyalty.

“One can't ignore the effects of the COVID-19 crisis,” noted Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys (www.brandkeys.com), the New York-based brand loyalty and customer engagement consultancy. “The combination of enforced store closures, sheltering-in-place and working from home, and trends towards more casual Zoom-call dress, were a condition only brands with high levels of loyalty could survive.”

Likelihood To Survive COVID-19 and Chapter 11 Correlates With Brand Loyalty

“Loyalty guarantees customers will be six times more likely to support the brand during uncertain circumstances,” observed Passikoff. “And you can't get any more uncertain than the COVID-19 marketplace. Loyalty has always been a leading-indicator of positive customer behavior toward brands.”

Retail brands customers voted onto this year's list included the following (#s in parentheses represent their ranking in top 100):

- Amazon (1)
- Home Depot (8)
- Nike (12)
- Trader Joe's (19)
- Ebay (22)
- Whole Foods (23)
- Zappos (25)

- Sephora (33)
- CVS (41)
- Zara (43)
- Costco (45)
- New Balance (46)
- Ralph Lauren (52)
- Sam's Club (55)
- Lowe's (58)
- Old Navy (68)
- T.J. Maxx (79)
- Dollar Tree (80)
- Dick's Sporting Goods (90)

All Retail Is Represented

"It's important to note that there's a mix of online and brick-and-mortar retailers on the list. You can blame the pandemic, sheltering-in, on-line meetings, and sweatpants all you want," said Passikoff. "But ultimately, whether consumers support a brand and whether the brand survives uncertain circumstances like the pandemic, comes down to how much loyalty the brand engenders," said Passikoff.

The Definition of Loyalty In The 21st Century

Brands need to be responsible for knowing what expectations consumers hold for their category and then meeting them as best they can. That's the definition of 'loyalty' in the 21st century; measure customer expectations, then meet or exceed them. The brands do that, always survive. Pandemics are no match for loyalty," noted Passikoff. "It's often said that 'clothing makes the man,' but as it turns out, loyalty ultimately makes the brand."

Methodology

For the current expectations survey, 3,265 men and women, 16 to 65 years of age from the nine US Census Regions participated. Brand Keys uses an independently-validated research methodology that fuses emotional and rational aspects for the category-specific Ideal and identifies expectations consumers hold for each. Brand Keys' research technique is a combination of psychological inquiry and higher-order statistical analyses, has a test/re-test reliability of 0.93, and produces results generalizable at the 95% confidence level. It has been successfully used in B2B, B2C, and D2C categories in 35 countries.

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