



PRESS RELEASE
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Brand Keys Loyalty Leaders 2026

**AI Moves From Novelty to Mainstream Reshaping Loyalty Landscape
As Loyalty Shifts From Transactional to Emotional**

**Amazon, PayPal, ChatGPT, Disney+, Coca-Cola, and TikTok
Representative of 5 Trends Amplifying Loyalty**

NEW YORK, NY, September 14, 2026 – Artificial intelligence is fundamentally reshaping brand loyalty, and the 18th annual *Brand Keys Loyalty Leaders List* identifies the brands capitalizing on this shift. The 2026 rankings reveal meaningful movement among industry leaders, driven by a profound increase in consumer expectations.

“AI has moved from novelty to mainstream and is driving emotional affinity for brands,” said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys, Inc. (<http://www.brandkeys.com/>). “AI has moved loyalty well beyond a transactional model, becoming a powerful driver of emotional connection, relationship, and behavior, substantively defining this year’s leaders.”

This year’s rankings highlight brands whose customer loyalty levels most closely align with expectations consumers hold for their Category Ideal, establishing an indisputable market hierarchy. By combining Brand Keys’ psychological modeling, advanced statistical analyses, and bridging the gap between complex AI deliverables and go-to-market success, the study identified forty-two premier Loyalty Leaders. “While you can find ‘leaders’ in every category, this year’s list of 42 provides a much clearer picture of the powerhouse categories and brands truly separating themselves from the pack,” noted Passikoff.

2026 Loyalty Leaders List

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|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Amazon | 22. Domino's |
| 2. Microsoft | 23. Chick-fil-A |
| 3. Google | 24. Uber |
| 4. Apple | 25. Mastercard |
| 5. ChatGPT | 26. Sephora |
| 6. Samsung | 27. AT&T Wireless |
| 7. Coca-Cola | 28. Delta |
| 8. Netflix | 29. Paramount+ |
| 9. TikTok | 30. Home Depot |
| 10. Walmart | 31. Nike |
| 11. PayPal | 32. McDonald's |
| 12. Disney+ | 33. Ford |
| 13. American Express | 34. eBay |
| 14. Levi-Strauss | 35. Crest |
| 15. Discover | 36. Whole Foods |
| 16. Hyundai | 37. Chase |
| 17. Costco | 38. Jeep |
| 18. YouTube | 39. UPS |
| 19. Visa | 40. Adidas |
| 20. Spotify | 41. Instagram |
| 21. Toyota | 42. Hulu |

Five Trends Shaping Consumer Loyalty and Leadership

Five powerful trends are reshaping how consumers engage with and stay loyal to brands:

1. **AI goes mainstream:** For years, AI was something brands talked about. Now it's something consumers use to find information *and* make decisions.
2. **Streaming consolidates:** The era of endless niche platforms is giving way to consolidation as consumers gravitate toward fewer, broader streaming networks. Convenience is becoming content.
3. **Invisible payments:** Seamless, embedded checkout experiences are outpacing stand-alone fintech solutions, making transactions entirely friction-free.
4. **Ecosystems eat single products:** Customer loyalty is locking into fully integrated brand ecosystems that favor everyday convenience over one-off purchases.
5. **Hyper-personalization:** Brands are leveraging data and advanced technology to deliver deeply relevant experiences, permanently raising consumer expectations. And once consumers experience something personally relevant, generic starts feeling bad.

Empowerment + Belonging = Loyalty Leadership

Consumers are loyal to brands in different categories, of course. But this year's Loyalty Leaders List is driven by two powerful consumer needs: empowerment and belonging. Intersecting with the rise of AI, these forces explain why specific categories dominate the 2026 rankings.

“Consumers are showing a stronger affinity for AI-enabled platforms, digital ecosystems, subscription services, and membership models,” said Passikoff. “What’s notable is that the list isn’t simply dominated by ‘cool’ brands. It reflects high-frequency, high-dependency relationships and brands that play a central role in everyday life.”

Technology and AI lead because they are now integral to how people work, communicate, search, create, and make decisions. Financial services, retail, and telecommunications similarly benefit from these frequent, meaningful daily interactions.

“But AI doesn’t replace the emotional side of loyalty. It makes delivering it at scale possible,” notes Passikoff.

Ultimately, the 2026 loyalty lesson is clear: the brands winning loyalty are those making consumers feel more capable, connected, and confident, and AI is increasingly helping them do all three.

Methodology

Our 2026 *Loyalty Leaders List* analyzed 75,500 U.S. consumer assessments of 1,385 brands in 140 categories. Respondents were 16-65, balanced for gender and screened for category and brand usage. The 100% consumer-driven rankings predictively assess the emotional and rational decision-making drivers identifying their Category Ideals. This is accomplished via a combination of psychological assessments and higher order statistical analyses. This year Brand Keys bridged the gap between AI category offerings and brand go-to-market success. The resulting metrics correlated highly (0.80+) with actual customer behavior, sales, and brand profitability.

Insights About Your Brand

To learn your brand’s ranking on the 2026 Brand Keys *Loyalty Leaders List* or integrate predictive emotional engagement metrics into your marketing strategy, contact Leigh Benatar at leighb@brandkeys.com.

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