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Dead brands walking: Blackberry, Quiznos, Kmart

Marketing guru picks the least engaging brands of 2014

03/11/2014 | ConsumerAffairs | [Shopping \(http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news_index/shopping.html\)](http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news_index/shopping.html)



By Truman Lewis

A former reporter and bureau chief for broadcast outlets and magazines, Truman Lewis has covered presidential campaigns, state politics and stories ranging from organized crime to environmental protection. [Read Full Bio→ \(http://www.consumeraffairs.com/about/staff/truman-lewis/\)](http://www.consumeraffairs.com/about/staff/truman-lewis/)

[Email Truman Lewis \(mailto:truman.lewis@consumeraffairs.com\)](mailto:truman.lewis@consumeraffairs.com) Phone: 866-773-0221



A Quiznos in downtown Tulsa, Okla. (Staff photo)

Blackberry, Quiznos and Kmart head the list of dying brands compiled by a New York marketing guru.

"A brand can't do well in today's marketplace if it can't engage consumers, no matter how many ads are run, and no matter how much social networking one does," said Robert Passikoff, founder and president of Brand Keys (<http://www.brandkeys.com>). "Brand engagement correlates very highly with positive consumer behavior, sales, and profits. All you have to do is look and see how the brand is doing in the marketplace to confirm customer assessments."

Passikoff said that brand engagement, defined as the degree to which a brand is seen to meet the expectations consumers hold for the ideal in the category, is a leading indicator of positive consumer behavior and brand loyalty.

They are the ultimate measure for the brand, "which should always be the beneficiary of any marketing or advertising effort," said Passikoff. "People can be engaged with a show or a social network or an event or an experience, but those are methods of engagement. Brand engagement is the ultimate goal."

By examining how well 64 brands did at meeting those expectations for their Ideal, Brand Keys identified the 10 least engaging brands for 2014. From the lowest level of engagement, brands ranked as follows:

1. Blackberry 52%
2. Quiznos 57%
3. Kmart 59%
4. Sony (e-readers) 60%
5. WOW search engine 60%
6. Sears (64%)
7. American Apparel 65%
8. Budweiser (regular) 70%
9. Coty Cosmetics (71%)
10. Volkswagen (79%)

"Brands compete in specific categories," noted Passikoff. "By seeing how well customers think a brand measures up to meeting their ideal retailer, or beer, or smartphone, allows for cross-category rankings like these."

"Where engagement is high consumers behave better toward a brand and the brand sees more sales and, along with that, should also see increased share and profits. Where engagement is low, the reverse happens," noted Passikoff. "Always."

For the Brand Keys 2014 survey, 32,000 consumers, 18 to 65 years of age, drawn from the nine U.S. Census regions, self-selected the categories in which they are consumers, and the brands for which they are customers (top-20%). Seventy percent (70%) were interviewed by phone, twenty-five percent (25%) via face-to-face interviews (to include cell phone-only households), and 5% participated online.