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Consumers Cutting Back on Purchases, but Indulgences Stay

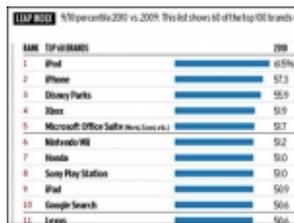
Leap Index Reveals Brands to Which Consumers Are Most Attached; Entertainment Still Rocks

By [Jennifer Rooney](#)

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NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- iPod. iPhone. Xbox. Wii. These are the brands feeling the love -- consumers' love, that is, according to NewMediaMetrics' first annual Leap Index, a ranking weighing the relative emotional attachment of consumers to brands in various categories.

Leave it to hard, plastic boxes to get all the warm fuzzies. "What's interesting is that in 2010, [based on] the top 100, with all the talk of recession and cutting back, America still loves its indulgences -- we still love our entertainment: iPod, iPhone, Disney, Xbox; we love our communications devices, we love shopping. Even if it is cutting back at a Walmart, still, things are being bought," said Denise Larson, NewMediaMetrics principal-founder. "What struck us is if you go and look, in 2010, Hellman's comes up at 72 out of 100," she said. "Twenty years ago, Hellman's was always the No. 1 brand. So what happened to mayonnaise? It got displaced by iPods and iPhones and Xbox."



Leap Index

Also topping this year's list are Honda, Sony PlayStation, iPad and Google.

NewMediaMetrics has been creating syndicated databases that measure emotional attachment to brands and media for the past five years, linking the high-value buyers of tracked brands to media they're most attached to. This year the company compiled the brand data into the Leap Index (Leveraging Emotional Attachment for Profit), which enables marketers to compare their brands' strength vs. competitors. To compile this year's index, NewMediaMetrics surveyed online a representative sample of the U.S. population -- 3,500 people ages 13 through 54, with annual income of at least \$35,000. The survey ran from March 17 to March 26, 2010.

Consumers who are most emotionally attached to brands -- those most unwilling to give up a given brand, designated as those who select 9 or 10 on a 0 to 10 scale to indicate emotional attachment (or "9/10s") -- are

obviously most valuable to marketers. They represent the consumers with the greatest likelihood to purchase that brand's products or services, go deeper into a product line, and spend more to get the brand. "In other words, they're not as likely to buy on the cheap," said Gary Reisman, NewMediaMetrics' principal-founder. "There's a tipping point, but they're less likely to be deterred by an increase in price. They'll spend more to get the premium package. They are two-and-a-half-times more likely to pay attention to an ad for that brand."

And, he said, each percent of emotional attachment will equal revenue potential for a brand.

Consumers who rank their emotional attachments to brands at the lower end of the 0-10 scale, dubbed "0-4s," however still can be important to marketers. "You can have some with a high number of threes and fours in a particular category or among a certain segment, and that's where the new-product opportunity is for those marketers," Ms. Larson said.

"It certainly is better to move up the curve, go to the higher end of the scale. But the 0-4s can be very telling to a marketer strategically as well. Every point on the scale is important because every point tells you something about your positioning in the marketplace," she said. Many consumer packaged-goods brands, for example, receive a high percentage of fives, reflective of frequent couponing in the marketplace and purchases made based on that rather than emotional attachment to any one brand.

Some brands, of course, dropped in EA rank between 2009 and 2010, most notably, Toyota, which went from eights to 36.

"That's what happens to a brand when they have a problem in the marketplace. EA is just reflective of what happens when you have that," Ms. Larson said. "Their PR initially was terrible, and it's reflected [in their rank]."

The Leap Index also enables marketers to compare consumers' emotional attachment to brands within categories, such as airlines. JetBlue, for example, has twice as much emotional attachment as United.

Within the credit-card category, meanwhile, Visa has more emotional attachment than Capital One, "which means they probably have much less attrition," Mr. Reisman said. "We see a lot of Capital One advertising, which is probably because they have to work much harder at acquisition [compared] to Visa [because emotional attachment is much lower]," he said.

Can a good marketing campaign lead to a higher EA score? "That's a hard one to extract out of this," Ms. Larson said. "The fact of the matter is they are all very strong marketers to begin with. They're spending money on marketing, they're spending money on advertising."

Still, "spending doesn't always lead to EA," Mr. Reisman said.

So what can marketers do to improve their EA rank? "They would take a deep look at their EA in the marketplace. They would benchmark it, analyze it and implement strategies to improve it because each percentage of EA in the marketplace is money in their pocket," he said.