

Building loyalty: the art of personalised brand experiences and advocacy

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The winds of change have swept across the African consumer landscape over the past decade, reshaping shopping habits and behaviours, particularly among our vibrant younger generations. Coupled with technological advancements and a shifting consumer-brand dynamic, this presents unique challenges - and opportunities - for businesses, retailers, and the marketing industry on the African continent.



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While businesses find themselves under immense pressure to deliver tangible results and demonstrate a return on investment, the battleground for consumers' attention is fierce. Today's discerning consumers have the power to choose which brands to embrace and which to ignore.

Buyer journeys have also become intricate and nonlinear. Spoilt for choice when it comes to channels, consumers transition seamlessly between the physical and virtual realms to gather information, form impressions, and make purchasing decisions.

So, how can brands cut through the noise and authentically connect with audiences, guiding them from mere awareness to becoming fervent advocates?

Cultivating emotions

One often overlooked but essential ingredient in this journey is the emotional connection brands establish with their customers. In our data-driven world, we can't lose sight of the critical role of emotions, connections, and experiences in driving purchases and nurturing long-lasting brand-consumer relationships.

We, as humans, don't merely exist in the world; we experience it. And our experiences profoundly influence our thoughts and emotions.

Conventionally, four core emotions are recognised – happiness, sadness, fear/disgust, and anger/surprise. But psychologist Robert Plutchik's 'wheel of emotion' perspective suggests that our emotional responses are far more nuanced; successful companies recognise this and incorporate it into their marketing efforts.



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Consumers usually have mixed emotional responses towards brands, often showing a limited connection. To shift this dynamic, brand marketers need to enhance positive emotions, moving the customer from initial acceptance to building trust and, ultimately, fostering admiration.

At the same time, they also need to reduce negative reactions, such as boredom, irritation, and anger, whether consumers engage with the brand at home, on the move, or during the purchasing process.

Embracing humanity

The question is: How can this transformation be achieved? At Canon, we do so by harnessing our knowledge of our customers to deliver personalised experiences at every interaction with the brand. It's all about understanding your customer.

Brands possess abundant opportunities to leverage insights and deliver personalised communications and experiences that resonate with customers, making them feel acknowledged and understood.

By investing time and energy in understanding target audiences – embracing their beliefs, behaviours, motivations, and drivers – businesses can craft more compelling value propositions, cultivating enduring brand loyalty.

The key is to provide products, content, and experiences that show genuine consideration for customers as unique individuals and offer them something meaningful or valuable.

Today's sophisticated audience insights empower brands to create highly personalised promotional marketing communications that align precisely with customer needs and are delivered at the optimal moment. This is where printed collateral, driven by genuine customer insights, can shine.

Print engages not only sight but also touch and smell, forging deeper connections with consumers than digital channels alone, capturing their attention when they are most receptive.

Creating memorable experiences

When brands extend their customer engagement focus to physical spaces like retail or hospitality environments, they can

apply the same understanding of their customers to create customised and immersive experiences that emphasise comfort, convenience, and connection.

Canon, for instance, uses customised printed décor, signage, thoughtful promotional materials, point-of-sale items, and packaging to all work together to elevate each customer's emotional journey from 'Ok' to 'Amazed.'

In the age of e-commerce, the 'unboxing moment' at home has emerged as another critical touchpoint in the brand-customer interaction. Will the customer receive a poorly wrapped item in a dull, brown box that does little to make them feel valued or encourage further exploration? Or will they receive a personalised parcel that treats them as a cherished customer, surprising and delighting them?

This moment is an opportunity to continue the conversation and build a long-lasting relationship.



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Reaping the rewards

Today's African consumers have high expectations of the products they purchase and the brands they support. In this fiercely competitive landscape, marketers must tap into their audiences' emotions to stand out and be remembered for the right reasons. Those who master this art will reap positive reviews and recommendations, propelling their growth.

Whether in the digital or physical realm, through print or online channels, personalisation, customisation, and individualisation elevate the brand, value the customer, and transform ordinary transactions into unforgettable experiences.

This, in turn, yields rewards for both consumers and businesses alike, forging enduring connections that transcend Africa's borders and cultures.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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