

# These customers ain't loyal... Or are they?

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Can people buy from you consistently, but not out of loyalty? It is possible that you may be selling services and/or products, business is booming but the majority of the transactions take place grudgingly.

The problem with this scenario (grudge repeat purchases) is that it renders no moment of self-introspection and analysis. Why would it? After all, you are reaching your targets.



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So how do you know if loyalty is based on your entire brand building and/or marketing efforts?

There are two different kinds of loyalty:

## The no-alternative loyalty

Although anecdotal with no hard data or proof to present; I have never come across a happy Putco bus customer – everyone single one of them is fed-up. Every single customer of theirs has had both bad and worse experiences, almost as though it is done so purposefully, that's how bad it is.

And yet the same fed-up and disgruntled customers spend their hard-earned money at the same company that they hate so much. Why? Well, it's simple; there are no alternatives. If there are; these alternatives are either an inconvenience, meaning that they require or ask more from people (to access alternatives, people will need to sacrifice more), thereby, this maintains Putco as the best-worst option.

Many share a similar but not so extreme sentiment about DStv. Some say they buy DStv's services because "they have no choice, meaning should an alternative become available that won't be an inconvenience and that meets their needs, they'd switch in a heartbeat.

This is true for many brands; their products and services are accessible and affordable, these inevitably become the main pull factors.

The problem with this type of loyalty is that it is *highly* dependent on the market – if a new player or alternative were to enter the market with better, faster and more convenient services, the end for those enjoying no-alternative-loyalty is eminent. People will switch with no hesitation.

## **Authentic loyalty**

On the other hand, *authentic* loyalty has very little to do with your brand and everything else to do with the loyalists themselves. People become loyal to something or someone, not because they've been told to do so, nor because they have no choice, but because they choose to. It is what they want. Loyalty is a feeling. It is something much deeper – hence a 'special', 'promotion' or 'gimmick' breeds short-term returns with no loyalty.

Loyalty comes from a deep connection between two parties.

An example of authentic loyalty is a relationship between a fan and a recording artist. The artist creates music that a fan connects with and over time; when delivered consistently, the fan starts feeling like the music is produced for them.

When a fan states that a recording artist creates music for them, the relationship is no longer about the artist, it's about the fan.

The same principle applies to brand building, advertising and marketing. Loyalty is not about the brand; it's about the customer or the end-user. Loyalty cannot be bought like products and services. Loyalty transcends the tangibles. Loyalty is a feeling.

Authentic loyalty is when customers or people choose you, even though they can absolutely choose anyone else besides you.

## **What kind of loyalty do you currently have with your target market?**

How do you know that every transaction (repeat purchases) is (are) based on loyalty?

How do you know that people buy because they like or love your brand? Should people even buy because they love or like your brand?

It is imperative to establish the type of relationship you have with your target market. The *no-alternative loyalty* is only sustainable until a new and better player enters the market. On the other hand, *authentic loyalty*, similar to that between a recording artist and a fan, is hard to be dismissed or compromised by external factors.

If you want to have the type of loyalty between a fan and a recording artist for your brand, then the implication is that there needs to be a deeper understanding of your desired market.

What sort of loyalty do you have with your target market? No-alternative or authentic?

## ABOUT BOGOSI MOTSHEGWA

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