

Don't be relegated to 'flavour of the month' - find your relevance

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Marketers today are aware of the fact that their customers are mutating. No longer the passive recipients of products or services, they have matured into watchdogs of corporate actions, who can vocally criticise or commend at a moment's notice. Importantly, they will ditch us at a moment's notice, too. "If we don't want to simply be a 'flavour of the month'," says Dale Hefer, CEO of the Nedbank IMC, "we need to up our relevance stakes."



Dale Hefer, CEO of the Nedbank IMC

Brand loyalty is defined as that special attachment which customers have to a certain brand, which they consistently turn to above its competitors, even in the face of new purchasing opportunities. Today, the accelerating challenges to brand loyalty include not only the price point but also aspects such as customer service and brand experiences or interactions – not only of the customer themselves but those of their family, friends and influencers as well.

The problem with brand loyalty is that it has been declining over the years, a trend that is well documented in numerous surveys and reports in markets around the world. Yet customer brand loyalty has been a foundational pillar of marketing for decades. A question worth considering is, could we be witnessing the 'death' of the customer as we have conceived them, rather than the death of brand loyalty? Could our relevance to the customer be waning?

Jamie Modalfsky, CMO of Nielsen [says](#) that consumers have an increasing expectation of brands being able to understand them; not only at the product or service level but more broadly in terms of what might be going on in their lives. She suggests that brands must balance their understanding of consumer needs with an increasingly nuanced sensitivity about the environment at

large and an appreciation of the uncharted world that consumers continue to be navigating. To do this means that marketers must be highly focused on their target market and in tune with what works and doesn't.

In the complex world of marketing today, where customers are spoilt for choice in terms of engagement, marketers have to be careful about preconceived notions of their customer. Forbes columnist, Paul Talbot says that the brand journeys our customers take may not be the journeys that marketers have designed and defined. Talbot says research points to almost 42% of surveyed marketers believing that at least 20% of their marketing budgets were lost on wrong channels or strategies.

Customer loyalty will wane if marketers are not consistently interrogating whether our offering is relevant to them or not. If we are to remain relevant beyond being the "flavour of the month" we must understand the evolving compact between marketer and consumer. In this journey, relevance will be the signpost in neon lights.

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