



If time is money, I've just misspent 14:47.

In a video with that runtime published today, CNET's Brian Cooley suggested that brand loyalty may be "all a crock." Cooley interviewed Lisa Lacy of Adweek, who set out to prove "there is no brand loyalty beyond obsessed superfans." Her chief proof point was the way in which consumers abandoned their favorite brands during the current pandemic. I hardly think the disruption of global supply chains provides a good environment in which to test brand loyalty.

As Lacy parsed the meaning – and questioned the very existence – of brand loyalty, she raised some valid points. And, I think, wound up proving the opposite of the point she intended to support.

She quite appropriately raised the issue of passion versus habit, pointing out that few consumers are in love with the brand of batteries or paper towels they buy. It's a point I've raised myself, and I agree that commodity items generally don't build the kind of brand loyalty more engaging products do. Habit likely guides commodity purchases much more than brand love.

But habit is one component of brand loyalty. Others include the level of trust a brand engenders and the kind of culture a brand builds – successful brands create a culture in which the consumer sees herself and a community in which she feels comfortable. And those elements do earn and sustain customer loyalty. While only a few customers feel the kind of "loyalty beyond reason" brands dream of, many millions are indeed loyal to their favorite brands.

Ms. Lacy mentioned brands like Yeti or Apple that many customers are passionate about; conceding, I guess, that brand loyalty exists after all. She also cited the changes in channels and buying habits that are eroding brand loyalty, like Amazon or Google. She noted, again correctly, that consumer loyalty is changing from CPG

brands to the delivery channel: Alexa, say, or Instacart. But while that's true – more in a moment – I can hardly think of a better example of brand loyalty than the customer who depends on Alexa or Siri.

In fact, Amazon, Google, Apple and others have created very successful *loyalty ecosystems*, capturing not just share of wallet but a significant share of consumers' lives – from shopping to dining, entertainment to home security. And that should be worrying to CPGs and other brands. They will have to find new ways to remain relevant and valuable to counter the re-intermediation effects of the smart voice assistants and apps. That will require building trust so consumers will share more and more relevant data, enabling brands to deliver truly customized value and experiences.

Your thoughts?

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