

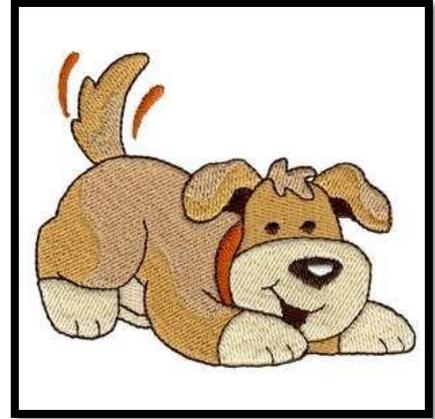
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Brand Loyalty, a Myth?

Almost all the branding efforts across the world are ultimately aimed at achieving brand loyal consumers. Effective branding ultimately enables various brands in having a long-lasting and strong presence in the market.

AMA (American Marketing Association) defines brand loyalty as:

"The situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category"



Here; twist lies within our understanding of the word 'loyalty'. If the meaning of loyalty was as flexible as mentioned in the above definition, a person spending five nights of a week with his wife and the remaining two with his girlfriend would still be a very loyal husband. If loyalty was all about "preferring" one over the other, then what's the difference between choosing and being loyal?

The true test of loyalty is indeed in the absence of the one that you are loyal to. Caring for someone in his good days and becoming least bothered in the hard times is something that would occur even in the absence of loyalty. Similar is the case with the brand loyalty. If the brand loyalty is merely judged on the basis of how frequently one purchases the products of a particular brand, the loyalty part seems to be pretty much compromised here. Giants like Coco-Cola have also faced severe consumer loss in their pesticide-issue times, and so is the case with any brand going through its bad days.

Here are three such situations which can actually determine the true brand loyalty...

"OUT of STOCK" times

When it comes to facing such a word from the retailers, most of the consumers opt for the nearest possible substitute instead of waiting for the stock to turn 'available'. This



This is very similar to flirting with someone else when your mate is not around. How many times have you opted to stay thirsty when the retailer failed to offer you the soft drink brand, which you consider yourself 'loyal' to?

“ATTRACTIVE” options



It often happens that when a competitor brand manages to give a logically, financially or technically better option for our 'usually preferred' brand, we easily shift to the more 'attractive offer'. This is very common in the field of consumer electronics, especially with the mobile phone brands. This is similar to giving a divorce, when some better contender comes up. If this is the case, brand loyalty is completely out of question.

“HYPER ANTI-BRANDING” scenario

It is very common that a consumer who has just recently “shifted” his 'brand loyalty' to some other brand; for some reason, starts over-branding his new preference. Sometimes this goes to the extent of brainwashing the others against the 'x-brand'. This typically bitchy attitude is a clear indicator of absence of 'loyalty' and also clearly concludes that brand loyalty is nothing but a flaunt-factor for the consumers.

