

Brand love: What makes it real?



By [Sheila McGillivray](#)

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"During difficult economic times, consumers gravitate toward the brands they know, the brands they love and trust."
Muhtar Kent (CEO of The Coca-Cola Company).

It is difficult times and this quote by Muhtar Kent prompted us to explore what underpins brand love today - what makes it real? Here's what we came up with:

Loyalty

"Brand loyalty does exist – up to a point. But it cannot be taken for granted." Subbu Subramanyeswar, Publicis Ambience India.

Consumer loyalty in South Africa is on the decline, particularly because for Generation Y (18-34) brand commitment has never really been a drive to purchase. But for consumers falling into the Baby Boomers and Gen X segments loyalty is still a driving factor, unless the brand begins to deliver a bad product or service, they will keep going back.

Examples of local brands who market strongly to their audience loyalty are Volkswagen and Koo (Tiger Brands).

Rewards

"I am still a Smart Shopper – or I will be until I experience something that really changes my feelings about the brand."
Clive Evans, The Strategy Department.

Rewards Programs and Loyalty Clubs in South Africa have shown significant growth in the last five years and the number of registered members has almost doubled since 2011. This translates into [over 82 million](#) registered programme members, meaning the average adult is signed up to at least three programmes.

The [top loyalty programmes](#) in SA are PicknPay Smart Shopper, Woolworths WRewards and Clicks Club Card.

Quality

"Perhaps the most salient factor for the most successful brands is the promise of consistent quality." Rosi McMurray, ED of Strategy, The Brand Union.

In the digital era of brand naming and shaming online, no brand's long term strategy can be sustainable without delivery on quality. Consumers hold all the cards and social activism has been gaining momentum since the dawn of social media. Brands have nowhere to hide.



For a sobering look at how big brands are faring with regards to quality and service, here is the most complained-about companies in South Africa [list](#).

Agility

"Building a brand is about a thousand little new touches ... Consistency is only for liars." Eric Ryan.

In the last ten years, major brands have lost market share to entrepreneurial brands who know how to be agile and to hustle - we call this the David and Goliath Syndrome.

No longer is their biggest competition the number one or number two brand in the category. Now, they're threatened by the dreaded "all the other", a collection of brands that often aren't even listed by name on a market share report, because they're viewed as too small to matter. Let's be straight. They matter. Their strategy is agile and often more appealing to the competition.

A big brand that caught our eye doing something agile and hipster is Pepsi, who have just launched their "[Artisanal Craft Soda](#)" in the US. This "craft beverage" contains kola nut extract, certified fair trade sugar and sparkling water - interesting times indeed!

Feeling

"What brands can do brilliantly is broker change in people's lives." John Grant, co-founder, St Luke's.



“Feeling” encompasses brand ethos. This includes values, authenticity, trust and (becoming crucial), being committed to visibly doing good and benefiting a cause outside of the product itself. A brand whose “feeling” or commitment marketing is outstanding is [Unilever](#) – promoting their green eco ethos (over product) in an ongoing series of beautifully designed communications.

In closing: All of these “brand love” realities will change to a greater or lesser degree, even in the short term. As traditional marketing audiences fragment, integrated and holistic campaigns need to look at incorporating all of these motivators. This is more important now than ever before.

ABOUT SHEILA MCGILLIVRAY

Sheila McGillivray's knowledge of the advertising industry spans four decades. Sheila's energy, enthusiasm and passion for her work has grown with every new position and challenge. Her experience in the industry is exceeded only by her willingness to keep learning and innovating.

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