

# The brand experience: Turning brand customers into brand fans

 By Jacques Burger

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There is something magical about birthdays, no matter what your age. February marks the birthday of our agency, and this year we turned 13 - quite a milestone. It is with great excitement that we enter the teenage years of brave and bold exploration, of new adventures and opportunities.



Source: © Julia Larson [pexels](#) We need to celebrate the quality of the offering says Jacques Burger

I also celebrated my birthday in February, and what I realised is that when one gets to a certain age, it's less about the number of years and more about the number of memories.

And presents of course! I must confess that I do love gifts, but I also equally love giving gifts. There is something really rewarding about taking the time to find someone special a gift you just know they will love.

## **At what point does accessible interfere with aspirational?**

My eldest daughter, also now a teenager, has always had her heart set on a classic silver Tiffany's pendant necklace. With her 14th birthday approaching, I decided it was time to make a very special trip to Europe even more amazing by buying her one. We popped into the beautiful Tiffany's store, excitement at an all-time high, and patiently waited our turn to be served.

Eventually, almost unable to contain herself, my daughter explained to the sales lady exactly what she was looking for. Her polite response? “No dear, we don’t sell the silver ones in the store anymore, only the gold ones. If you want the silver one, you need to buy it online.”

Although almost impossible to ignore my daughter’s disappointment, my thoughts immediately went to the LVMH acquisition of Tiffany’s and I couldn’t help but wonder if this was part of their strategy to move the brand more upmarket again. And if it was, was it a good idea? At what point does accessible interfere with aspirational, and can the two co-exist? But that’s a conversation for another article.

Back to my disappointed daughter. Always in fixing mode, I told her as we left the store that we could just order it online and have it delivered to the hotel.

Much to my surprise she responded, “No dad, I don’t think I want it anymore. I wanted to buy it in the store, I wanted to watch them wrap it, put a ribbon around the beautiful blue box and then into a bag and then walk out the store with my Tiffany’s shopper – having it delivered at the hotel isn’t going to be the same.”

She wanted the experience associated with the brand almost as much as she wanted the product itself.

## **Making people fall in love with a brand**

In that moment it struck me that so much of what I see in marketing today is focused on conversion and sales and pricing and funnels and performance media and data and optimising, and so little consideration is given to making people fall in love with a brand. Creating those unforgettable moments that people will look forward to and remember.

Brands have become so obsessed with turning a customer into a buyer, they’ve forgotten how to turn a customer into a fan. Yet, we all know that when someone loves your brand it allows you more price elasticity and forgiveness when you mess up, which takes some of the pressure off your product and service always having to be the best.

Customers are also less likely to be lured away by competitor offerings. The old adage ‘The heart knows reason that reason knows nothing of’ sums it up perfectly.

## **Creating current demand versus future demand**

Short term pressures and a world of instant gratification means we’re only focused on the customer in-market, ready to buy right now. Essentially if you are not keen to buy something right now, we are not interested in speaking to you.

All good and well when we are looking to meet sales targets for this month, but what about next year?

My worry is that we are backing a model that doesn’t do a great job of building a sustainable pipeline of customers for our businesses, and that we are eroding the equity of the very thing we are meant to be protecting and building – the brand!

In short, we are focusing on creating current demand versus future demand. Not for a moment am I suggesting that we abandon the idea of sales targets and engaging at the point of conversion, nor am I saying that a great promo can’t be a brand-building opportunity.

## **A more exciting experience**

What I am saying though is that it would be a really great idea to think beyond the promo campaign, and maybe consider one that celebrates, for instance, the quality of the offering.

Perhaps there is an opportunity to not just delight with price or product specs, but also in how we solve a problem for the customer or bring them a more exciting experience.

Let's all think about what our full communication mix looks like right now: is it all product catalogued online backed by the perfect e-commerce platform or is there also a pretty little blue box in a beautiful bag, carried proudly by a very happy and beaming teenager, somewhere in the mix?

## ABOUT JACQUES BURGER

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