

Fluid experiences vs. moments of joy

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Try to recall a positive experience you've had with a product or brand. What you will probably remember are short bursts—minutes or even seconds—where the quality of the product or service exceeded your expectations.

In that moment, a video made you think, or an ad made you laugh (even LOL). Maybe you were guided to solve a problem by being treated as a person, not a number, or you realized that a company's mission was not the usual BS, but their true philosophy. That leads me to ask:

Is it possible for humans to feel a single emotion consistently, with no ebb or fluctuation? And how does that inform design, branding and marketing methodologies?

Since life is composed of ups and downs, peaks and valleys, constant feelings are unachievable. The things we see, the people we talk to and the environments we walk through collectively impress on us sensations that influence our behavior and mood in both the short and long term. There are too many variables we cannot and should not try to control. Further, with today's constant information overload, every person needs a break from interacting with family, friends and brands. Humans love engagement but also require periods of detachment and silence.

So why are companies aiming to establish nonstop conversations (mostly one-sided) with their customers? And why are we, designers, facilitating this approach?

Designers, strategists and other creatives strive to deliver experiences that help brands connect with users. But if life itself cannot achieve a constant state of positive emotions, why are we working toward this unnatural goal in our creative work? Too often, companies try to force the issue by battering customers with unrequested information at every touchpoint—whenever, wherever. Instead, we should focus on crafting experiences that balance the peaks and valleys inherent in relationships: from instances of little communication to authentic moments of joy and wonder. As with anything in life, balance is key.

Our goal as designers (and brand advocates) is to help brands go through the natural cycle of human relationships with their customers. While we still need apps, websites and ads to help brands become successful, we should take a strategic (i.e., gradual) approach to storytelling, content and design that lets users discover and build trust with a brand by providing glimpses of surprise and excitement. The latter moments might be transitory, but they become engraved in our memories and make people truly connect with brands. Every form of communication we expose our users to should offer some value. Instead of blasting them with nonstop ads, we can use humor, cleverness and honesty to ensure that when we do speak out, our message become memorable. This mentality of honest giving helps brands become believable, more human and worthy of trust—transforming the communication flow from a monologue to a dialogue.

Conclusion

Good friendships take time, effort and honesty. The relationship between brands and consumers is no different. People hunger for wonderment, knowledge and problems to solve. If designers can craft spaces for people to experience life's ups and downs alongside the companies they trust, we'll open the doors to building natural consumer-brand relationships that are truly long term. And these two-sided affairs can be the catalyst for some truly joyful moments. ///

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