

AI Sparks

Cutting through the AI hype with one clear insight each week

The Future of Attribution Isn't Attribution

For nearly two decades, marketers have been obsessed with attribution. First-click. Last-click. Multi-touch. Data-driven attribution. Marketing Mix Modeling. Every new model promised to answer the same question: “Which channel deserves the credit?” But, is this the question we should be asking? Not because attribution technology isn't improving. Quite the opposite. It's because customer behavior is changing.

Today's consumers don't interact with every channel in the same way. They use different channels for different reasons. They may ask AI to research products and simplify complex decisions. They may turn to Google to validate choices and compare alternatives. Social platforms inspire discovery. Marketplaces provide convenience. Brand websites build trust, offer deeper product information, and strengthen long-term relationships. Each channel serves a completely different purpose. Channels are no longer just touchpoints. They are contexts of intent.

This brings to mind Clayton Christensen's *Jobs-to-Be-Done* framework. Customers don't simply buy products. They “hire” them to accomplish a specific job. Perhaps the same is now true for marketing channels. Customers don't hire channels. They hire different channels to accomplish different jobs.

AI is hired to reduce uncertainty. Google is hired to validate. Social media is hired to inspire. Marketplaces are hired for convenience. Brand.com is hired for trust. If that's true, then assigning 27% of a sale to one channel and 18% to another starts to feel like measuring the wrong thing. Maybe the future of measurement isn't asking: “Which channel deserves credit?” Maybe it's asking: “Did every customer job get done exceptionally well?”

That is a fundamentally different way of thinking about marketing. The brands that win in the AI era may not be those with the most sophisticated attribution models. They may be those that best understand why customers hire each channel in the first place.



Your spark for the week:

The future of attribution isn't attribution. It's understanding the jobs customers hire each channel to do.

NetElixir is an AI-First digital marketing agency helping leading eCommerce brands unlock profitable growth through data, experimentation, and innovation.