NetElixir

EC 048

AISparks

Cutting through the AI hype with one clear insight each week

When AI Shops for Us, Who Owns Brand Loyalty?

For decades, brands have invested in building customer loyalty. Through memorable experiences, emotional connections, consistent quality, and trust, they've worked to become the customer's preferred choice. But what happens when the customer is no longer making every purchasing decision?

Imagine a personal AI shopping agent that knows your preferences, budget, purchase history, and even your changing needs. It continuously evaluates alternatives and recommends, or eventually purchases, what it believes is best for you. Would you still choose your favorite brand? Or would you simply trust your agent?

Here's where things get interesting. Traditional brand loyalty is built around the customer's relationship with a brand. But in an AI world, the customer may develop an equally strong relationship with their AI agent. And this agent may have no particular reason to remain loyal to yesterday's preferred brand if another offers better value today.

But will this shift be equally significant across product categories? For everyday essentials, we may happily let AI choose based on price, availability, and reliability. For skincare or electronics, we may value AI's guidance, but still want to make the final decision. And for luxury goods or meaningful gifts, the experience of choosing may be part of what makes the purchase special.

Does that make brand loyalty less important? Perhaps not. A trusted brand could still matter enormously, especially when quality, reliability, identity, or emotional significance influence the purchase. But it raises an intriguing possibility. Brands may increasingly need to earn two kinds of preference. The customer's emotional preference and the AI agent's evidence-based recommendation. And these two may not always agree.

Perhaps the future of brand building will require us to think differently about what loyalty actually means.



Your spark for the week:
When AI starts shopping for us, brand loyalty may not disappear. But brands may need to earn their place in both the customer's heart and the agent's decision.

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

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