

Forever is a long time

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Years ago, a vehicle manufacturer ran a campaign during Women's Month where women could test drive their vehicle. I responded and booked a test drive. However, the reason I remember this campaign - and the vehicle manufacturer - so well is not because it was a positive experience for me.

The negatives started at the dealership. I was ignored, then kept waiting for 30 minutes and then passed onto someone else because the vehicle sales person was busy with what looked likely - in their eyes - to be a better sale.

Ironically enough, I was in the market for a vehicle at that time and would have loved a vehicle from that brand. But my experience led me to vow never to buy that vehicle brand. Ever. And forever is a long time.

I am not alone in this experience. Most of you reading this are probably nodding your heads right now and recalling your own misaligned brand experience - be it a fast-food outlet, bank branch, restaurant, retailer, or other.

This is what happens when the brand promise or campaign is let down by the brand experience. You see, my brand experience failed to live up to what the brand campaign had promised me.

Service design

It is what Andrew Human, CEO of the Loeries Awards, calls the last point where the consumer interacts with the brand. "That experience that happens at that point is service design."

Service Design is a new category that has been introduced to the Loerie Awards. In fact, the Loeries is the first advertising awards in the world to include this category.

The Loeries already incorporates different media types, such as packaging design, product design, architecture and interior design, in relation to how a brand uses these designs to build a relationship with its audience. Bringing service design into the Loeries was an extension of this.

Claims of advertising being 'dead' are exaggerated

"People today like to say advertising is dead, but in fact we are currently in the most exciting period for advertising because advertising involves every point where it touches consumers. This is how we need to understand advertising today," explains Human.

Instead, many still view advertising as defined by specific media types. He says years ago advertising was Above the Line (ATL) or Below the Line (BTL). "Today there is no line at all. If it is engaging or interacting with the consumer then it is a point for potential advertising."

Service design is where the customer engages with the brand and that experience has to be seamless, positive and enjoyable because it is these experiences that make or break a customer. "It has the ability to pull in new customers and keep loyal ones - but bad service delivery has the opposite effect," he explains.

"There is no point in having a fantastic campaign, regardless of the platforms you choose, if your brand experience is negative - and you cannot blame the campaign," he adds.



Misconception

There is also a misconception that results have only now become important. Ask any company what its goal was 20 years ago and what its goal is today and they will give you the same answer: to sell as much product/service as possible.

What has changed is how we communicate, says Human. "We can no longer talk in one direction or in a linear fashion as in the past. Advertising today is simply not an ATL or BTL campaign, in which your store manager or call centre is completely removed."

Today's advertising is about your brand connection with your audience and this has to include service design as part of your brand communication mix. This is not an ad agency thing, but something that is integral to any business.

Service design includes loyalty programmes, call centres, in-store service, as well as the online and mobile space experience.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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