

Love only gets you so far: like the rest of us, brands need trust and respect

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For people to be loyal to your brand, they have to admire it - and that requires love, trust and respect, says Andreas B. Eisingerich, Professor of Marketing at Imperial Business School

Visit the business section at the airport bookshop and you'll see that a lot has been written about how important it is to make customers love your brand. And with good reason: when people love your brand, they'll be more likely to buy it time and again.

Some brands flourish simply because they are so enticing. Take the successful, if addictive, DIY music video app musical.ly, which allows users to lip sync songs to create their own clips. People feel connected; they have a laugh. Over 90 million people have signed up worldwide - it's become the most downloaded free app in some 30 countries.

But is it enough to merely love a brand? We don't think so. Our research shows *three* critical psychological states drive long-standing brand relationships: love, trust and respect. Love can make people passionate about a brand. But passion is likely to

wane over time.

Trust adds confidence and sustains brand relationships by reducing anxiety and creating feelings that the brand will be there for you. When you trust a brand, you believe it's acting in your best interests. This is powerful. Read the news or switch on the television and it's easy to feel disorientated and alienated; people see the world they grew up in disappearing in front of their eyes. Brands that succeed in tapping into feelings of nostalgia or trust are able to connect with consumers in a deep and meaningful way. Take the long-established German daily newspaper [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*](#). People don't read it for entertainment: they read it because they trust it.

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Trust is a bit like health: we tend to take it for granted as long as it's there, but we certainly miss it if we have to live without it. Yet, is trust enough? No – trust is a bit boring. It lacks charisma; it lacks flavour.

Respect, however, adds another critical dimension to a brand relationship. When we respect a brand, we feel inspired. We applaud it for the principles it holds, and for the way it helps people feel they can be their best possible selves.

Brand relationships are strongest when brands command love, trust *and* respect. We, for example, love [*Palantir*](#). Its services to governments, for-profit and non-profit organisations are heartwarming. Its website is visually appealing and enticing.

We also trust Palantir and its ability to make sense and use of data. Whether it's facilitating research and drug discovery, limiting money laundering and corruption, or preventing national and international terrorism, Palantir keeps us safe and protected.

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And we respect Palantir. Why? Because we believe the brand is working towards a noble purpose. It wants to make a difference in the world. Palantir has second-to-none internal marketing, so employees truly feel connected and care about the brand's mission in this world.

In short, we *admire* Palantir. That is the term we use to describe brands based on love, trust and respect. Our research shows that, when consumers admire a brand, it can yield significant benefits for companies. It can help create a base of loyal customers who are happy to share their thoughts, feelings, insights and perspectives with others – essentially giving the brand free PR.

What this means for companies is greater revenue and lower costs. Employees like working for brands they admire, which also means lower staff turnover and greater employee commitment. And admired brands are more successful at developing brand extensions and alliances with other companies.

Consumer preferences and habits change, and successful brands also adapt and move with the times. But how many of today's popular brands – such as [Snapchat](#), [Reddit](#) and [Facebook](#) – will still exist in 2025? If people stop trusting, loving and respecting at least some aspects of these brands, they won't survive.

The [path to admiration](#) can be long and painful. My advice is to start simple: focus on small things you can do. Otherwise you might grow frustrated and end up doing nothing. You have to start somewhere, so pick something that helps your consumers feel more protected, or allows them to do more with less, and share some core beliefs. Stand for something. One of my favourite sayings is “*jia-you*” – “keep going, don't give up”.

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