# "A STUDY ON BRAND LOYALTY AMONG MILLENNIALS: STRATEGIES AND INSIGHTS FOR ENGAGING MILLENNIALS"
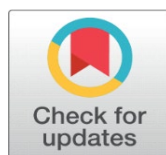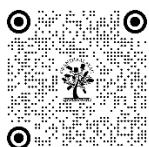
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## ABSTRACT

This study makes a significant contribution to the fields of brand loyalty and Generation Y (often referred to as Millennials) by investigating strategies to influence loyalty behaviours within this demographic group. Generation Y presents a unique challenge for marketers due to their substantial presence in the market and their tendency to exhibit lower levels of brand loyalty compared to previous generations. This group is also known for its resistance to conventional marketing techniques, which can render traditional strategies ineffective.

Despite the growing importance of Generation Y as a key consumer segment, existing literature has yet to fully address the complexities of targeting this demographic. Specifically, there is a lack of comprehensive research on effective tactics for mitigating their perceived disloyalty and adapting marketing strategies to engage them more effectively.

In response to these gaps, the study introduces a proposed conceptual model that offers a framework for modifying and enhancing current marketing tools to better resonate with Generation Y. By doing so, the model aims to provide actionable insights into how businesses can improve brand loyalty among this influential group of consumers. This approach seeks to bridge the gap between current marketing practices and the evolving preferences of Generation Y, ultimately helping businesses foster stronger, more enduring connections with this critical market segment.

**Keywords:** Brand Loyalty, Marketing Strategies, Market Segment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As the largest and most prominent consumer cohort, Generation Y, often known as Millennials, has changed the marketing landscape with its own characteristics and behaviours. This generation's technological sophistication, global social consciousness, and weaker brand loyalty compared to prior generations necessitate new marketing tactics to effectively engage them and create long-term brand loyalty.

Marketers have distinct hurdles due to millennials' customer behaviours. Notably, they are less loyal to brands (Soares et al., 2017). However, research suggests that these problems can be overcome by developing strong emotional connections with brands and aligning brand values with Millennial tastes (Bochert et al., 2017).

Generation Y, born between 1977 and 1994, is a distinct consumer group that poses a challenge to marketers due to how they respond when compared to previous market segments in their generation. It is becoming a more desirable market segment due to its size and strong spending power, both now and in the future (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001).

Marketing to Generation Y can be particularly tough due to their resistance to traditional marketing tactics and the difficulty of ensuring loyalty (Bush et al., 2004; Megehee et al., 2003). Securing further loyalty behaviours, such as continuing repeat purchases, is difficult (Sebor, 2006; Wood, 2004). According to Bakewell and Mitchell (2003), there has been little scholarly research on how Generation Y reacts differently to marketing campaigns than other demographic groups when it comes to shopping.

Marketing to Generation Y can be particularly tough due to their reluctance to traditional marketing tactics and the difficulty in ensuring loyalty. Securing extra loyalty behaviours, such as repeat purchases, is difficult (Sebor, 2006; Wood, 2004). According to Bakewell and Mitchell (2003), there hasn't been much scholarly research into how Generation Y reacts differently to marketing efforts than other demographic groups when it comes to shopping.

This essay outlines how marketers might modify conventional marketing theories and strategies to appeal more to the brand loyalty of the generation Y consumer base. In order to increase generation Y consumers' brand loyalty, a conceptual model based on theories of integrated market communications and brand strategy is put out.

The paper is organised as follows: following the introduction, a pertinent literature review is given; then, the suggested brand loyalty model with its constraints is presented; and finally,

some doable suggestions for reaching out to Generation Y in marketing; and lastly, some closing thoughts and potential directions for further research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Y, often known as Millennials, is the largest and most influential consumer demographic. They have transformed the way businesses approach consumer engagement, brand development, and marketing. Because of this generation's unique characteristics—such as their technological prowess, awareness of global social issues, and proclivity for disloyal behaviour—marketers must reconsider their approaches if they are to effectively engage consumers and cultivate long-term brand loyalty.

Given that Generation Y is more impulsive and brand-unloyal than previous generations, establishing brand loyalty with them is a major challenge (Soares et al., 2017). However, research suggests that marketers can overcome this challenge by developing a strong emotional relationship with the brand and connecting brand values to generational preferences (Bochert et al., 2017).

Customers from Generation Y are commonly referred to as "digital natives," having grown up in a world where technology is important to daily life (Moreno et al., 2017). This technological skill, combined with a desire for instant gratification, has led in a preference for digital and interactive marketing methods that allow for customisation and involvement. Brands may better interact with this generation and form emotional bonds by implementing viral, participatory, and networked marketing methods (Bochert et al. 2017).

Furthermore, marketers can differentiate themselves by including sustainability and social responsibility into their campaigns and advertising, given Generation Y's global social consciousness and desire for brands that share their values (Moreno et al., 2017).

## 3. CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT AND BRAND LOYALTY

Consumer brand engagement (CBE) has been found as a significant factor in brand loyalty among Generation Y consumers. Leckie, Nyadzayo, and Johnson (2016) discovered that involvement, participation, and self-expressive branding improve cognitive processing, affection, and activation, resulting in greater brand loyalty. Furthermore, Shen et al. (2010) demonstrated the direct and indirect effects of CBE on brand loyalty, with emotional ties having a greater impact. These findings highlight the need of increasing customer brand involvement in order to boost brand loyalty.

## 3.1. TRUST AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The significance of trust in understanding how social media marketing affects brand equity and loyalty has also been investigated. Ebrahim (2020) emphasised the importance of trust in social media marketing, demonstrating its impact on brand equity and loyalty. This shows that marketers could use social media interactions to create trust with Generation Y consumers and increase brand loyalty.

## 3.2. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND BRAND LOYALTY

Balakrishnan, Dahnil, and Yi (2014) proposed that marketers should focus on building a relationship between their brand and Generation Y customers in order to boost brand loyalty. This suggests the necessity for initiatives that promote emotional ties and brand-consumer relationships, resulting in increased brand loyalty.

## 3.3. TECHNOLOGY AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

Fernandes and Moreira (2019) emphasised the beneficial effects of beacon technology implementations on marketing tactics, consumer happiness, and loyalty. This shows that using technical improvements into marketing campaigns can help to increase brand loyalty among Generation Y customers.

## 3.4. BRAND PERSONALITY AND BRAND LOVE

Atulkar (2020) discovered that brand personality has a favourable and considerable impact on brand love, which then drives brand loyalty. Understanding how brand personality influences brand love can provide significant insights for designing brand loyalty tactics for Generation Y customers.

## 4. FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND LOYALTY

A number of elements have been identified as impacting brand loyalty among Generation Y consumers. Rather and Camilleri (2019) found that packaging, price, and brand awareness all have a strong beneficial impact on brand loyalty. Furthermore, Alzoubi et al. (2022) emphasised the role of brand interaction and involvement on social media in boosting brand trust and loyalty through customer brand engagement.

Numerous studies have found that consumer brand loyalty is important for organisations because it can save costs and produce ancillary benefits such as positive word-of-mouth (Liu, 2007; Gustafsson et al., 2005; Wood, 2004; Yi and Jeon, 2003; Rundle-Thiele and Bennett, 2001; Oliver, 1999). Customer brand loyalty is defined as a consumer's positive perception of a brand and their commitment to sticking with it by purchasing the same good or service from it in the present and future, regardless of what their competitors are doing or how the market is changing (Liu, 2007; Wood, 2004; Grassl, 1999; Oliver, 1999).

According to Keller (1993), a brand is a name, image, drawing, or mix of these that distinguishes one product from another on the market. Wood (2004) and Rundle-Thiele and Bennett (2001) have both conducted extensive study on improving client loyalty. Oliver's (1999) model of consumer loyalty is a widely acknowledged example. According to this concept, loyalty is divided into four phases, and marketers must approach each level differently in order to encourage consumers to progress towards loyalty.

The development of cognitive loyalty towards the brand by the non-consumer is the first step in Oliver's (1999) paradigm. When a customer believes a brand or product is the best on the market, they develop cognitive loyalty since they have internalised that view. Instead of the brand or product itself, the loyalty that is formed is focused more on the consumer's cost versus benefit analysis. It is crucial to communicate the product's features and price at this point.

Customers are highly susceptible to changing their behaviour because they haven't yet found happiness with the brand or product. When a customer reacts affectively to a consuming experience, they are satisfied (Cadotte et al., 1987). After a consumer experiences satisfaction, they perceive the brand more favourably and proceed to stage two of the model, known as affective loyalty (Pasovac et al., 1997).

Because they enjoy and have been pleased with the brand, consumers are devoted to it at stage two. They haven't committed to the idea of making recurring purchases, thus they might yet switch behaviours. Affective loyalty is influenced by a brand's experience as well as its projected connotations and image (Oliver, 1999).

Customers exhibit their choice for a brand at stage three of the model, conative loyalty, based on its likeability, quality, and constant ability to fulfil. Conative loyalty is the state in which customers opt to repurchase a brand or product. If buyers try a new product that better satisfies their demands, the initial goal may be jeopardised. If the product fails to meet their expectations after a trial, or if a competitor's offering is superior, they will abandon both the product and their initial objective.

The brand will go on to stage four of the model if it can continue to impress clients and be easily found when they want to buy it. This stage, sometimes known as action loyalty, encompasses the behavioural aspects of loyalty. Oliver (1999) defines action loyalty as a customer's desire to make another purchase despite challenges because their initial intent to do so has been met.

Until now, there has been no literature discussing how to make the usually disloyal members of generation Y more loyal. There is only one study that looks at the 18–24 year old consumer sector within generation Y, and it has limited scope and generalisability (Wood, 2004).

Building a strong customer base among Generation Y is especially crucial because the advantages for businesses will only grow as this market grows in size. Brand loyalty can endure well into the future if it can be ingrained in this generation when they are still young (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001).

One technique for increasing brand loyalty is linked market communications (IMC), which consists of a collection of compelling messages linked across many forms in order to communicate and establish connections with customers. In addition to enhancing the efficiency, organisation, and integration of information provided to clients, integrated marketing communications (IMC) transmits a more coherent message than traditional advertising (Reid, 2005; Zahay et al., 2004).

Marketing communications appear to be crucial for helping customers in generation Y become familiar with brands, their connotations, and how these connect to them (Wood, 2004). In this market, building loyalty using conventional marketing strategies is ineffective. It is challenging to attract Generation Y customers since they are sceptical about and resistant to marketing initiatives (Bush et al., 2004; Megehee et al., 2003). The suggested model, however, explains how significant marketing theories, such as IMC, might be applied in novel ways to affect generation Y's loyalty behaviours.

## 5. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The focus of the suggested brand loyalty model is on generation Y and the variables that may affect how customers go through the stages. In order to drive customers to the intended action loyalty stage, it is explained how important branding and IMC tactics are and how they can be used to influence movement through stages.

The model depicts how a non-consumer advances through four stages of loyalty and is based on Oliver's customer loyalty idea (Oliver, 1999).

The initial phase refers to generation Y clients before they are exposed to the brand; as a result, they are classed as non-consumers. Because all customers begin as non-consumers and have the potential to become consumers if they learn about and are persuaded to try the brand, it is critical to include non-consumers in the definition of brand loyalty (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007).

To encourage Generation Y consumers to consider the goods, we must first introduce them to the brand and its benefits. A buyer cannot consider acquiring a brand if they are unaware of it (Pasovac et al., 1997). Attention should be paid to the brand's quality as well as its implications and image, particularly among Generation Y (Wood, 2004). According to brand theory, a brand's image must correspond to how people perceive themselves in order for the brand to appear appealing.

This is crucial for Generation Y since they utilise brands to express who they are (Lippe, 2001). One way to help achieve this alignment between the company and the customer is to utilise a well-known celebrity endorsement who

increases the brand's reputation and personifies it (Braunstein and Zhang, 2005). In order for an endorsement to be successful, the company and the consumer's values must align with the celebrity (Braunstein and Zhang, 2005; Sukhdial et al., 2002).

Proposition 1: Building a brand's reputation and image will affect how consumers in generation Y view the company.

Proposition 2: The chance that customers in generation Y will shift to stage two loyalty rises if this brand image matches how they see themselves.

At this point, IMC can be utilised to inform and raise awareness of the brand among non-consumers (Megehee et al., 2003). Marketers should utilise IMC to first grab the attention of their target audiences in order to get them to pay attention to the information being shared. It is challenging to get the attention of generation Y consumers since, by the time they are 21 years old, they have been exposed to about 23 million commercial messages (Mitchell et al., 2007; Sebor, 2006). Advertising messages that appeal to Generation Y and align with their beliefs will be the only ones they pay attention to (Scarborough, 2007). In order to capture generation Y consumers' attention and get them talking about the brand, marketers need to produce innovative advertisements (Sebor, 2006; Tsui and Hughes, 2001).

Proposition 3: If marketers are able to successfully grab the attention of customers in generation Y, IMC has the potential to create brand awareness, which in turn leads to cognitive loyalty.

Brand equity is the consumers' view of the brand's value, and marketers can develop it by using branding strategies and integrated marketing communications (IMC) (Wood, 2004). Building brand equity will result in stage two loyalty from generation Y customers believing that the brand is superior to anything else available (Keller, 1993). Here, IMC plays a significant role in persuading customers to have positive opinions about the brand or product quality (Reid, 2005). Advertising plays a critical role in explaining to consumers in generation Y why the product being offered is better than competing offerings and in elevating the brand's perceived quality (Ambler and Hollier, 2004).

Customers in generation Y form a sense of high quality when they believe a product to be superior than others available on the market, which encourages cognitive loyalty (Zeithanl, 1988).

Proposition 4: IMC and branding can be used to build brand equity, which improves the brand's perception.

In phase two of the strategy, a non-consumer cultivates cognitive loyalty by perceiving the brand as the best available (Refer to Figure 1). Oliver (1999) contends that the possibility of a shift towards cognitive loyalty will be influenced by marketing communications regarding the qualities and cost of the product. Price shouldn't matter as much in the context of generation Y, who care more about the brand representing how they see themselves (Lippe, 2001). Furthermore, generation Y is not price sensitive because they equate high price with excellent quality and have a significant amount of discretionary spending power (Sebor, 2006; Bush et al., 2004).

Since generation Y consumers are driven more by identification and aspiration requirements than by utility needs, brands and brand connections are given greater weight than product attributes (Lippe, 2001). They may express who they are and become who they want to be thanks to the brand (Aaker, 1997).
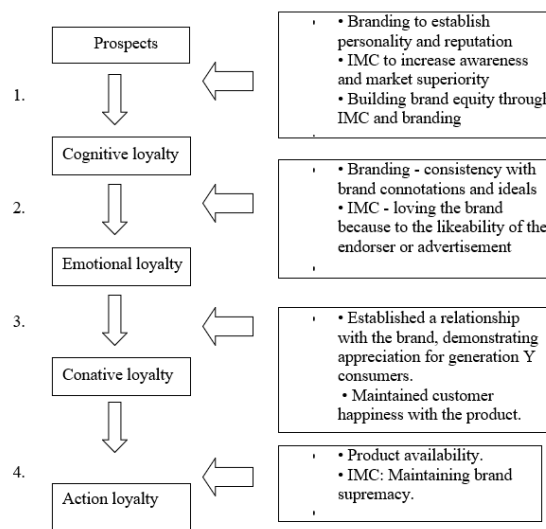


**Figure 1** Model of brand loyalty for generation Y

To shift from cognitive to emotive loyalty, Generation Y buyers must have many favourable encounters with the company (Figure 1) (Oliver, 1999). To have a favourable experience, their perceptions of quality must be maintained and their expectations of the brand's performance met (Pasovac et al., 1997). Because generation Y consumers' faith in the superiority of the product is strengthened, they are less likely to pay heed to claims made by competitors, as previously created brand associations should be reinforced by real-world experience with the brand (Wood, 2004; Keller, 1993).

A positive product evaluation leads to satisfaction and the formation of positive feelings towards the brand (Bagozzi, 1992). Communicating acceptable expectations to the customer before to the trial and keeping consistency between products may influence whether a Generation Y customer has a pleasant experience with the product (Wood, 2004; Keller, 1993). When Generation Y customers believe a brand has failed to meet their expectations, their trust in the company's superiority is shaken, and the brand's perceived quality suffers (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Proposition 5: A positive product experience will strengthen opinions about its quality and make consumers pay less attention to what rivals say, which will lessen their inclination to switch.

According to Oliver (1999), enjoying the brand appears to be required for Gen Y customers to go to the Conative loyalty stage (see Figure 1). IMC and branding strategies may have an effect on this. Branding can be used to improve liking by ensuring that a brand's values fit with those of Generation Y consumers (Aaker, 1997). Using a celebrity endorser whom generation Y consumers look up to and strive to be like can result in more congruence between the brand's aspirations and their beliefs (Shuart, 2007). This congruence may result in a link with the brand, as well as feelings of enhanced brand equity and similarity.

Proposition 6: By using branding to improve the generation Y consumer's congruency with the brand's values, relationship-building and liking can grow, propelling the generation Y consumer into the affective loyalty stage.

Furthermore, IMC can be used to promote likes. According to Smit et al. (2006), creating appealing brand communications can help people assimilate information and build positive sentiments towards the message, which are then connected with the company. At this stage, the main impact of IMC is not in its clear message, but in the feelings it evokes in the customer towards the brand (Ambler and Hollier, 2004).

Proposition 7: IMC can be used to help brands become more likeable or to develop ties with Y generation customers that will take them to the affective stage of loyalty.

According to Oliver (1999), a consumer who has previously experienced affective loyalty to a brand is represented in stage three of the proposed model (refer to Figure 1) shifting to conative loyalty. Whether or whether Generation Y consumers sense a connection between themselves and the company should be considered in this trend. As previously mentioned, branding and IMC can be utilised to promote this relationship (Pasovac et al., 1997; Keller, 1993). Brand ties are extremely important to Generation Y. The company must make its Generation Y customers feel special and appreciated (Sebor, 2006).

Furthermore, loyalty programs that cater to generation Y consumers' self-esteem needs can be used to create relationships with them by differentiating and making them feel special (Sebor, 2006; Yi and Jeon, 2003).

Proposition 8: The probability of transitioning to stage four will rise with the establishment and maintenance of a relationship with generation Y consumers that demonstrates gratitude and particular attention.

To keep believing that the product is the greatest on the market, generation Y customers must also continue to be satisfied with it (Gustafsson et al., 2005). Customers are less inclined to move to a different brand if they are happy with the product experience since they will see it as a waste of time and effort (Wood, 2004).

Proposition 9: Sustaining brand pleasure by consistent excellent quality will reinforce the belief in the brands' superiority and reduce the chance of switching.

The consumer advances from having the intention to purchase loyalty (conative loyalty) to displaying observable loyalty behaviour, or actually repurchasing the brand, at the last step of the model, called action loyalty (see Figure 1). Oliver (1999) contends that entry into this stage will depend on the product's availability. It appears that product availability matters considerably more to consumers in generation Y. Given that consumers in generation Y are demanding and accustomed to getting everything they want, the lack of availability of a product may cause them to perceive the brand unfavourably and consider switching (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Keller, 1993).

Proposition 10: Product availability will determine whether or not a customer from generation Y engages in brand repurchasing as a behavioural loyalty activity.

Proposition 11: Even generation Y consumers who are variety seekers or multibrand loyal might exhibit more loyalty and repurchase behaviours if they are persuaded to advance into the last stage of loyalty action.

Oliver's (1999) approach has some notable shortcomings, one of which is that it doesn't address how to win over customers who are generally unfaithful because they value variety or a wide range of brand experiences. Certain consumers are predisposed by a personality attribute to desire variety in their life, and this tendency translates to their experiences with consuming (Oliver, 1999). These customers usually exhibit disloyalty due to their urge to experiment with various brands and goods. Additionally, they may be multibrand loyal, which denotes that they purchase a range of brands out of loyalty.

In order to get generation Y consumers into the ultimate stage of loyalty, this proposed model assumes that they would continue to purchase the brand frequently, but not every time a need for that specific product arises. While the generation Y customer is still buying the product and seeking diversity, rather than not even taking the brand into consideration when choosing which different brands to buy at a given time, this incomplete loyalty is still advantageous for businesses.

## 6. MODEL'S LIMITATIONS

There are certain restrictions on this theoretical framework, which is based on Oliver's (1999) model. It hasn't yet undergone empirical testing. Its range is constrained. It takes a broad view of Generation Y and ignores cultural variations and any potential ramifications. Cultural variations may influence generation Y consumers' propensity for brand loyalty and influence marketers' decisions about which appeals are suitable for this market. Furthermore, although generation Y customers have received a lot of attention lately, as they age, their goals, values, and behaviour may shift.

Once generation Y passes the impressionable adolescent stage, the arguments given might no longer be relevant (Wood, 2004). This model does not account for the product, which may potentially have an impact on loyalty behaviours; rather, it merely makes broad generalisations based on the segment.

Despite these limitations, marketers can still benefit from the strategy by using it to encourage generation Y consumers to become more brand loyal.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MARKETERS

### 1) IMC and branding

Branding and IMC are two crucial marketing strategies to employ in order to win over more Y generation customers. The choices taken in relation to communications and

Strong market research on generation Y or the subset of generation Y that marketers wish to target should form the foundation of branding strategies. According to Tsui and Hughes (2001), consumers belonging to generation Y will disregard marketing initiatives if they do not find the brand or IMC relevant. It is advised that messages have a high degree of customisation to foster creativity and hold recipients' attention long enough to build brand awareness (Sebor, 2006).

Marketers should recognise that Generation Y wants to be treated differently from other segments of the market in their marketing communications (Lippe, 2001). Furthermore, according to Tsui and Hughes (2001), relationships are crucial in this market, and marketers should use branding and IMC to foster these connections.

### 2) Loyalty Programs

Marketers employ instruments like loyalty programs to enhance the probability of recurring sales and obtain crucial data regarding the customer and their purchasing patterns. These programs, despite their high cost, have the potential to build brand loyalty among Generation Y consumers by fostering relationships (Liu, 2007).

Building a relationship with generation Y requires loyalty programs, which can express thanks to customers and raise their perception of the company's level of service (Yi and Jeon, 2003). The customer may feel good about the company and feel more connected to it as a result of this appreciation from the business (Bitner et al., 1998). Because loyalty programs enhance the benefits, they may also make switching more expensive for customers (Liu, 2007).

Gen Y customers are drawn to memberships and loyalty programs, which can help foster greater brand loyalty (Gronbach, 2000). They are productive because it gives them a sense of community or kinship (Gronbach, 2000; Tsui and Hughes, 2001). Additionally, people feel unique since these memberships cater to their ego demands by offering exclusive discounts and items (Sebor, 2007; Gronbach, 2000).

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Since the literature has not addressed how to influence generation Y to become brand loyal, the suggested theoretical model highlights the importance of and strategies for increasing brand loyalty of Y for marketers. The model suggests that not all market segments react equally to marketing initiatives aimed at boosting brand loyalty, which has important consequences for theory development. The model also emphasises how distinct generation Y is and urges further study in the field as well as the empirical testing of the proposed hypotheses

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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