

# Understanding the Drivers of Brand Loyalty in Mixed Media Context

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## ABSTRACT

With the increase in the popularity of the internet, brand loyalty building initiatives have evolved. The shift is from managing a predominantly one-way communication to a two-way communications with the consumer, as well as facilitating the peer to peer communication among consumers. Academic research has been focused on either the traditional media which uses primarily a one-way communication, or the digital media which employs two-way communications. However, in the present marketing context, both these forms of media coexist and interact with each other. This study attempts to bridge this gap in research by exploring the drivers of brand loyalty in mixed-media context and the relative strength of the different constructs studied. For this study, a comprehensive model of brand loyalty in mixed-media context has been developed from literature, which included constructs like satisfaction, interactivity, emotional value and perceived co-creation, perceived belongingness, perceived empowerment and brand equity. This model was tested empirically in the Indian market.

The results show that interactivity; empowerment and co-creation which are easily achieved in the digital media, are significant in developing brand loyalty. 'Emotional value', which was driven by satisfaction and brand equity from the traditional media as well as perceived empowerment from internet-media context, was another key construct which facilitated this interface. Managers could use this model to design their brand loyalty initiatives and allocate marketing resources optimally.

**Keywords:** Brand loyalty in mixed media context, Antecedents of brand loyalty in mixed media, Model for brand loyalty, Brand communication model, Antecedents of brand loyalty in mixed media

**JEL Classification:** M3

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## INTRODUCTION

Marketers face several challenges in trying to grow their brand in terms of market share, as well as mindshare. Intensification of competition and spread of internet have increased the options as well as ease of search and comparison for the consumers. It has resulted in loss

of existing consumer base for some brands. Reducing loss of existing consumers can significantly improve sales and profitability, which could be achieved by increasing brand loyalty. Typically, it costs four to six times as much to attract a new consumer as it does to retain an old one, who also rope in new consumers to

the company (*Reichheld and Sasser, 1990*). Brand loyalty induces repeat purchase behaviour and makes consumers less sensitive to pricing, because they perceive some unique value in the brand that available alternatives do not provide (*Bloemer and Kasper, 1995*). However, developing brand loyalty is an expensive and resource-intensive process as it requires acquiring new consumers and persuading them to buy repeatedly from the company (*Agrawal and Siddharth, 2010*).

The growing popularity of internet, mobile applications etc. have transformed the way consumers purchase by reducing the search and comparison costs significantly. Thus, it is expected to impact the brand loyalty. It is therefore important for the marketers to find out the interlinkages among the variables of the traditional media as well as internet-enabled media, so that brand loyalty programmes can be managed more effectively and resources allocated optimally in the mixed-media context.

Conventional marketing use predominantly one-way communication while the online uses technology-enabled mediums like website, social media and so on. In online context, consumers can interact and engage with the marketer, as well as other consumers (present, past and potential) in a two-way communication in real time. These technology-enabled marketing mediums are much more personal and more interactive; their impact is likely to be dependent on the psychological, cultural and social context of the consumers. Research has suggested that online and offline media can not only supplement each other but may even operate as a substitute for one another (*Goldfarb and Tucker, 2011*). Mixed-media context is the reality for the marketers and needs to be researched for optimal deployment of marketing resources. Since culture influences the way the different media interact with and impact consumers, there is a need to make culture-specific media planning (*Ferle et al., 2008*).

India is a conglomeration of various cultures and subcultures, making it a complex market. Not much research has been done on brand loyalty formation in the mixed-media context in India. The aim of this research is to conceptualise the drivers of brand-loyalty formation in the mixed-media context and empirically validate the same in India.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology like the internet has the potential to affect human behaviour and culture. The future of business-to-consumer and consumer-to-consumer communication and relationships lies in status updates, tweets, 'likes', and recommendations that the consumer receive from their circle of trust (*Mirchevska and Markova, 2011*). However, the traditional media vehicles are still extensively used by marketers. Hence, the brand's interaction with consumers is a result of the two different sources of influence and their interactions.

Building and preserving brand loyalty is important for creating sustainable competitive advantage (*Gommans et al., 2001*). The payback of brand loyalty for companies could be enormous, and it has the power to impact consumer decision to purchase the same brand, and prevent their shifting to competitive brands (*Yoo and Stout, 2001*). Brand loyalty had been conceptualised in many ways by scholars, like 'the attachment that a consumer has to a brand' (*Aaker, 1991*) and 'a commitment to re-buy or to re-patronise a preferred product or service' (*Kotler and Keller, 2009*). Literature on brand loyalty, in the traditional and the internet-media contexts, suggested that constructs like brand equity, satisfaction, interactivity, emotional value, perceived co-creation, perceived belongingness and perceived empowerment to be important. Hence, they were studied in detail to understand their influence as well as interactions.

### Brand Equity

Oliver (1980) defined brand equity as "a deeply held

commitment to rebuy or re-patronise a preferred product or service consistently in the future". Situational influences as well as marketing efforts had the potential to cause switching of brands. Brand loyalty had a positive effect on brand equity and also acted as a mediator between brand attitude and brand equity (Chaudhuri, 1999). Subsequent researches confirmed that loyalty had a direct positive effect on brand equity (Atilgan et al., 2005; Joseph and Bharadhwaj, 2009; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). According to Marshall (2010), brand loyalty might create or sustain a customers' patronage over long term, thereby increasing brand equity. Thus, we have studies which have shown a clear relationship between brand equity and brand loyalty. However, some indicated that loyalty was a subset of brand equity concept, whereas some suggest brand equity to be impacting brand loyalty in a cause-and-effect relationship. Thus, we hypothesise:

H1: Brand Equity has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty in mixed media.

### Emotional Value

'A brand is experienced in its entirety', which means that both emotions and rational thinking are involved in experiencing a brand (Urde, 1999). Emotional aspect of brands make a key difference for consumers and people were quite interested in buying emotional experiences (Gobé, 2001). The process of brand recognition and recall are important for consumer's choice of brands, and the level of brand influence is directly connected to the attached brand image (Aaker et al., 1996). The objective measurement of emotional value is important for proper evaluation of brand equity; and these emotions also influenced the consumer's purchasing behaviour. The fundamentals of trust towards brands are found in the emotional values that the consumers attribute to it, contrary to popular belief of it being found due to consumer's convictions towards superior value of these brands (Walla et al., 2011).

Brand loyalty as a concept is driven by consumer emotions (Hazan and Shaver, 1994); and consumers developed emotional attachment with brands (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Hence, it is important to know the kind of relationship the emotional value (which the consumer derived by consuming the brand) have with the brand loyalty and brand equity. Individuals who have strong emotional attachment to a brand are committed to preserve their relationship with it and are faithful to the brand (Miller, 1997).

Thus, we hypothesise that:

H2: Brand Equity has a positive impact on Emotional Value.

H3: Emotional Value has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

### Perceived Empowerment

Consumer empowerment is activated and advanced by marketing efforts designed to satisfy consumer's needs and wants (Wright et al., 2006). Consumers' empowerment required that consumers have authority in decision-making (Pires et al., 2006). User-generated content enables consumers to connect in new digital spheres, making them feel powerful and able to define brands on their own (Christodoulides, 2009). Consumers use Internet and content creation as a means to exert control over brands (Downing, 2006). In digital media, these involvements provide empowerment to consumers with insights about other consumers. These consumers have higher expectations and they want to feel empowered in the choices they enjoy and the level of brand information they received, which lead to accruing of emotional value. A desire to collaborate, availability of information about other consumers, interaction and creativity were drivers of content creation. Fuchs et al. (2010) highlighted that empowered consumers have higher future loyalty intentions towards a firm than non-empowered consumers.

Thus we hypothesise:

H4: Perceived Empowerment has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

H5: Perceived Empowerment has a positive impact on Emotional Value.

### **Satisfaction**

Brand satisfaction has been conceptualised as 'end state of consumption or patronisation; it is reinforcing pleasurable experience' (Oliver, 2010). Donio *et al.* (2006) suggest that satisfaction and commitment are indicators of brand loyalty. Brand equity provided value to consumers by cultivating confidence in the purchase decision and promised satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction was a precursor to building strong brand equity; also, perceived consumer satisfaction has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Though there are studies that highlight satisfaction to be the factor which enable brand loyalty (Donio *et al.*, 2006), some studies also show contradiction to this relationship and provide alternative drivers such as emotional value or brand equity (Pappu and Quester, 2006). Consumer satisfaction affect attitude after purchase and this attitude continuously influence the repurchase intention (Oliver and Bearden, 1983). Satisfied stakeholders' provide different types of intangible value to a firm, which enhances its overall value and therefore, its brand equity (Blumenthal and Bergstrom, 2003; Keller, 1993).

The perception of high-product quality is the basis of consumer satisfaction, which leads to brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). There are arguments that perceived switching costs is a moderating variable which influences consumer loyalty through determinants such as consumer satisfaction (Lee *et al.*, 2001). Satisfaction leads to enhanced loyalty to the firm, as well as consumers becoming less price sensitive and less influenced by competitors' gimmicks (Dimitriades, 2006).

Satisfaction is related to consumer's learning from their prior experiences; it explains the post purchase activities like product usage and word of mouth. Some researches also highlight product-consumption experiences to impact a variety of emotional responses (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986). Since emotions constitute a significant source of human motivation and employ substantial influence on memory and thought processes, it was important to consider the relationship between emotion and satisfaction for explaining consumer behaviour. Studies reveal that the state of high satisfaction had explicit emotional connotations, and emotions have strong direct effects on satisfaction (Plutchik, 1980).

Thus, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H6: Satisfaction has a positive impact on Brand Equity.

H7: Satisfaction has a positive impact on Emotional Value.

### **Interactivity, Perceived Belongingness and Perceived Co-creation**

The internet has significantly changed the way companies engage with their customers. In this digital era, a consumer can interact with other consumers and companies around the world with expediency. With evolving time, consumers have transitioned to becoming 'proactive consumers', which leads to a sense of 'empowerment' (Ernst *et al.*, 2010).

Empowerment and the greater control of consumers to create value are referred to as 'co-creation' (Ernst *et al.*, 2010). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) defined co-creation as the interface between the firm and the consumer that lead to value creation. Though not much of research has been done on perceived co-creation and its impact on brand loyalty, some researches show it as an enabler for high involvement with the brand. Consumers are able and willing to contribute their ideas for new products, which can be used to fulfil their needs, while interactivity leads to

perceived empowerment (*Ernst et al., 2010*). However, there is evidence that interactivity and the technology-enabled interactive communication systems, such as social media, might actually be destroying, rather than enhancing brand loyalty (*Schultz and Block, 2012*). Thus, studies were not unanimous in confirming the relationship between interactivity and brand loyalty.

Consumers value brands that enjoy a good reputation among their peers or groups to which they aspire to belong (*Long and Schiffman, 2000*). By internalising the brand, consumers develop a sense of cohesion with the brand, which establishes cognitive and emotional linkages that connect the brand with the self (*Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007*).

Proliferation of the internet has facilitated the firms to experiment with more interactive new product development (NPD) models. In particular, firms are now able to integrate consumers' ideas and views within their NPD processes owing to the ability to build strong communities that allow thousands of consumers from around the world to contribute and work in partnership with the firm (*Ogawa and Piller, 2006*). Companies are increasingly using the internet and social media technologies to enable consumer empowerment through the use of co-creation and increase their sense of belongingness (*Füller et al., 2009*). The brand equity and the sense of association a consumer has with a brand are strongly and positively interrelated to each other, it is also viewed as 'a sign of quality and commitment' (*Atilgan et al., 2005*). More positive association towards a brand, would result in higher brand loyalty (*Yoo et al., 2000*). Prior research highlights that brand communities engage with user-generated content to fill the void left by conventional media. It gives brands a new identity and inculcates a sense of belongingness within its consumer group (*Muniz and Schau's, 2007*).

Studies on user-generated content suggest that consumer's participate in content creation for a variety

of reasons. Consumers no longer have a passive role in the NPD process, and value is increasingly being created jointly by the firm and the customer, rather than by only the firm (*Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004*). However, some studies have proposed that the increased value is not solely utilitarian and consumer co-creation strategies have strong psychological influences (*Fuchs et al., 2010*). Traditionally, firms have limited the consumer's role to be choosing between a range of pre-determined products to select the one which best met their needs. Although firms did consider customer's outlook with the aim of attaining a better understanding of consumers' needs (*Berthon et al., 2008*), the firm typically had the sole power to decide on the design and types of products they would want to market (*Samli, 2001*).

Thus, we conclude the following hypotheses:

H8: Perceived Belongingness has a positive impact on Perceived Empowerment

H9: Interactivity has a positive impact on Perceived Empowerment.

H10: Perceived co-creation has a positive impact on Perceived Empowerment.

When these hypotheses are put together in a comprehensive manner, an overall model of brand-loyalty formation in mixed-media context emerges, which is given in Figure 1.

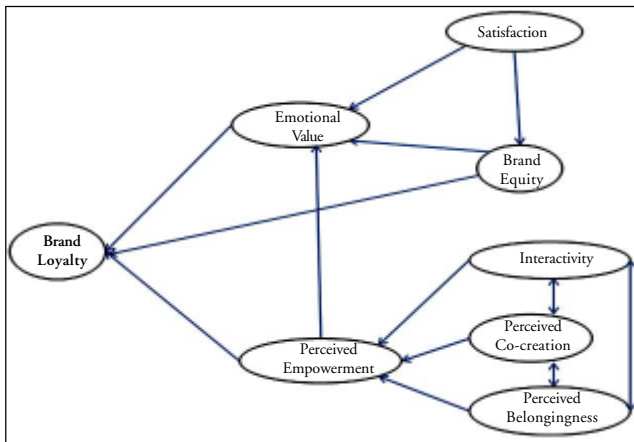
The corresponding hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Brand Equity has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

H2: Brand Equity has a positive impact on Emotional Value.

H3: Emotional Value has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.

H4: Perceived Empowerment has a positive impact on Brand Loyalty.



**Figure 1: The conceptualised model of brand loyalty in mixed media context**

H5: Perceived Empowerment has a positive impact on Emotional Value.

H6: Satisfaction has a positive impact on Brand Equity.

H7: Satisfaction has a positive impact on Emotional Value.

H8: Perceived Belongingness has a positive impact on Perceived Empowerment

H9: Interactivity has a positive impact on Perceived Empowerment.

H10: Perceived co-creation has a positive impact on Perceived Empowerment.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To test the model derived from literature, a conclusive research design was chosen, which was based on large representative samples and quantitative analysis for the gathered data (Malhotra, 1996).

### Data Collection Instrument and its Validity

The model included constructs like brand equity, satisfaction, interactivity, brand loyalty, perceived empowerment, perceived belongingness, perceived co-creation and emotional value. The data-collection tool was a survey questionnaire where a 5-point Likert scale was used. The items used in the scales used for

the different variables were adapted from literature and hence their content validity was derived from literature. Table 1 depicts the detail scales that were used to measure the different variables, along with their specific references from where they were adapted.

The questions were then put in random order and the relevant demographic information was also collected to have an understanding of the representativeness of the sample collected.

### Reliability of the Scales

Since the scale items were adapted to the context of this specific research, the reliability of the scale needed to be confirmed. Cronbach's alpha scores were used to check the internal consistency, where the ideal value was above 0.7. To test the reliability of the scales for the constructs, a pilot survey was conducted with 62 respondents where the reliability scores were found to be more than 0.7 for all the constructs. Hence, the same questionnaire was used without any further changes. The Cronbach's Alpha for the variables of the total datasets also met the recommended value of >0.7. The construct wise Cronbach's alpha figures are given in Table 2.

### Sampling & Data Collection

Purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, was used for the study. Care was taken to include the set of people who were the target group of many of the marketers, the typical urban, young and people with disposable income, who were exposed to both conventional and digital media. The responses were collected through e-mails as well as physically administered. The total questionnaires that were sent through e-mail were 200, out of which usable responses were 146. The total physically administered responses were 277, out of which 11 were discarded as they were not complete in all respects.

Thus, the final responses that were empirically tested were 412 that included 338 male and 74 female

**Table 1: Description: scale development references**

Variables & description	Statements	Literature reference
Brand equity	It makes sense to buy X instead of any other brand, even if they are the same	Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000)
	Even if another brand has the same feature as X, I would prefer to buy X	
	If there is another brand as good as X, I prefer to buy X	
	I can recall the characteristics of brand X without effort	
Satisfaction	This is one of the best brands I could have bought	Mano and Oliver (1993)
	My choice to buy this brand was a wise one	
	This brand is exactly what I need	
	Owning this brand has been a good experience	
Emotional value	X brand is one that I would feel relaxed about using	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)
	X brand would make me feel good	
	X brand would give me pleasure	
	X brand would make me want to use it	
Perceived belongingness	I feel a commitment to continue buying this brand	Self developed Aaker <i>et al.</i> (2004) Self developed
	I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this brand	
	I feel a sense of belongingness with this brand	
Brand loyalty	When I buy a product where brand X is present, I always buy brand X	Sen <i>et al.</i> (2001) Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2005)
	Only under extreme circumstances would I consider purchasing a product of a brand different from X	
	Even when another brand is on sale, I would prefer the brand X	
Perceived empowerment	I am satisfied with my ability to being heard in the brand community	Pires <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	I have control over my participation in the brand related discussions	
	I have ability to influence the way the brand interacts with me in the online medium	
	I have control over the specific engagements that that the brand attempts with me	
Interactivity	I felt that I had a lot of control over my visiting experiences at this Website	Yoo and Stout (2001)
	The Website makes me feel it wants to listen to its visitors	
	The Website processed my input very quickly	
	I was able to obtain the information I want without any delay	
Perceived co-creation	I respond to the online posts that interest me	Pralhad and Ramaswamy (2004)
	I make a decision based on information posted by other members	
	I post information on both the risks and benefits relating to a topic (product/service)	
	I report posts when I think the comments are offensive	

respondents. The age bracket included less than 20 years, 21 to 29 years, 30 to 39 years and above 40 years; the sample comprised 67, 215, 80 and 50 respondents, respectively, in each of the age brackets. The Internet usage (in hours per week) of the sample was tabulated; it comprised of 169 respondents who

spent less than 5 h; 93 respondents who spent between 5 and 10 h; 73 respondents who spent 11 to 15 h; and 77 respondents who spent for more than 16 h. Thus, the sample was quite well spread out and representative of the demographics which were in the target market of the marketer.

**Table 2: Description: reliability scores of the scale items**

Variables	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Brand equity	0.83
Satisfaction	0.76
Emotional value	0.85
Perceived belongingness	0.78
Brand loyalty	0.72
Perceived empowerment	0.76
Interactivity	0.7
Perceived co-creation	0.73

## FINDINGS

Confirmatory factor analysis was done for the variables in the model by using the AMOS 4 software. Chi-square statistic, which gives an indication of goodness of fit, should be supplemented by one incremental fit index, one goodness of fit index, one absolute fit index and one badness of fit index, be used to assess a model's goodness of fit (Hair *et al.*, 2007). We used GFI, AGFI, RMSEA and TLI for this research. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (Table 3) confirmed that the variables selected were indeed factors which were related to each other.

The fit measure of conceptualised model was found out. A select set of fit measures, which are relevant for our research are given in Table 4. We notice that the fit measures of the model for brand loyalty in mixed-media context were in the acceptable region.

Based on the regression analysis output of the AMOS 4 software, empirical testing supported all the

**Table 3: Fit measures of the confirmatory factor analysis**

Statistic	Recommended value	Obtained value
Chi-square		1,044.643
Df		530
Chi square/df	<3.00	1.971
GFI	>0.90	0.901
AGFI	>0.80	0.867
RMSEA	<0.08	0.052
TLI	>0.90	0.923

**Table 4: Model fit indices for theoretically developed model**

Statistic	Recommended value	Obtained value
Chi-square		766.1
Df		381
Chi square/df	<3.00	2.011
GFI	>0.90	0.891
AGFI	>0.80	0.867
RMSEA	<0.08	0.05
TLI	>0.90	0.904

hypotheses at 5% level of significance (the  $p$  value being <0.05) and the relationships where all positive as the beta coefficients were positive. The standardised path coefficients of the four constructs under investigation were measured. All the path coefficients were significant at the level of 0.05 with the direction of influence as hypothesised. The results of regression analyses are given in Table 5.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the different variables that influence brand loyalty in mixed-media context and the interrelationships among them. The empirical evidence confirm that the variables identified are relevant and give quantitative measure of the strength of the interrelationships among them.

Brand loyalty in the mixed media is directly driven by the three constructs of 'Emotional Value' which had a beta coefficient of 0.415, 'Brand Equity' which had a beta coefficient of 0.331, and 'Perceived Empowerment' which has a beta coefficient of 0.326.

Analyses of beta coefficients suggest that 'Emotional Value' was strongly influenced by 'Satisfaction' and to a much lesser extent by 'Brand Equity'. 'Perceived Empowerment' was strongly impacted by 'Interactivity', followed by 'Perceived Co-creation' and to a much lesser extent by 'Perceived Belongingness'. Thus, brand loyalty is driven by the traditional media, as well as the technology-enabled media.



**Table 5: Regression analysis results**

Relationship	Beta coefficient	p-Value	Result
Brand loyalty ← Brand equity	0.331	0.000	Supported
Brand loyalty ← Emotional value	0.415	0.000	Supported
Brand loyalty ← Perceived empowerment	0.326	0.000	Supported
Brand equity ← Satisfaction	0.443	0.000	Supported
Emotional value ← Brand equity	0.113	0.034	Supported
Emotional value ← satisfaction	0.634	0.000	Supported
Emotional value ← Perceived empowerment	0.133	0.005	Supported
Perceived empowerment ← Perceived belongingness	0.089	0.038	Supported
Perceived empowerment ← Interactivity	0.835	0.000	Supported
Perceived empowerment ← Perceived co-creation	0.282	0.000	Supported

'Brand Equity' not only had a direct effect on 'Brand Loyalty', but also indirectly on the construct of 'Satisfaction' and 'Emotional Value'. This is typically a real-world phenomenon and is based on the consumption, either direct or vicarious. Hence, maintenance of 'Brand Equity' is important and it can be leveraged to enhance 'Brand Loyalty' using the traditional advertising media.

Emotional Value is driven by Satisfaction, Brand Equity and Perceived Empowerment. Here, Satisfaction is primarily a real world phenomenon, while Perceived Empowerment is primarily a virtual world variable. Perceived Empowerment is in turn driven by Interactivity, Perceived Co-creation and Perceived Belongingness, all of which are predominantly processes that are well managed in the virtual world.

The conventional construct of consumer satisfaction leading to brand equity is still very relevant. However, emotional value which is another strong driver of brand loyalty is now driven by 'Satisfaction', 'Brand equity' as well as the predominantly technology-enabled mechanisms like 'Perceived empowerment' and 'Perceived co-creation'. Finally, it becomes evident that the virtual world elements of perceived empowerment have significant influence on the brand loyalty, which in turn is mainly influenced by the interactivity and perceived co-creation. Thus, the

marketing managers have to actively incorporate the virtual medium in their quest for building brand loyalty. This could be achieved by focusing on increasing consumer interactivity and forum for co-creation.

The inherent weakness of mainstream media, that is one way communication, which does not give adequate voice to consumers, is overcome by the online media, which provides a two-way communication feature. The consumers want to feel empowered and be a part of the decision making in NPD. The digital platform gives vent to consumer opinion on brands, facilitated by the peer-to-peer interactivity and social media. This has resulted in organisations becoming more proactive so as to not disappoint their consumers in any way. The consumers are much more powerful now; they may make or break a brand. Lately, advertising is also getting skewed towards interactive communication vis-à-vis earlier advertisements where the brand was the cynosure. For instance, the new Samsung ActivWash washing machine television ad indicated that the new feature in the machine was a suggestion of the consumers, wordlessly highlighting the importance of the consumer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwjnr4d72ZM>).

As the digital medium is evolving, the consumers are rapidly becoming used to interacting with brands. Social media is becoming significant in influencing

consumer behaviour; thus, brands are also flocking to social networks. Marketers are establishing brand communities that address the fervour of the core audience and potential customers, attracting loyal and engaged customers. This eventually can lead to better business results as the consumers are looking out for brands that can endow them with the power of co-creation, empowerment, and sense of belongingness.

The consumer-decision journey starts with the consumer's initial-consideration set based on brand awareness, perception and exposure to recent touch points. Brand awareness affects perceptions and taste: 'people like the familiar and are prepared to ascribe all sorts of good attitudes to items that are familiar to them'. Perceived quality influences brand associations and affects brand profitability. Brand associations are anything that connects the consumer to the brand, including 'user imagery, product attributes, organisational associations, brand personality, and symbols'. Brand loyalty is at the heart of brand's value, and the marketer has to 'strengthen the size and intensity of each loyalty segment' (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 17). Mixed media is facilitating marketers to achieve this much better.

The consumer actively evaluates other brands in the same domain before actually making the purchase. There are websites, such as [www.junglee.com](http://www.junglee.com), which helps a consumer to compare prices of various products being sold on different portals. It has become very transparent between the consumers and brands. Companies must look beyond distribution-channel-driven push marketing and instead invest in vehicles that let consumers interact with the marketer as well as relevant peers. The internet is especially critical

during the active evaluation phase as consumers seek information, reviews and recommendations. The internet with its search engines and social media provides consumers the convenience of searching at low cost in a short time, making it a preferred destination. Thus, there is a great opportunity to leverage social media in a way that's beneficial and effective for both consumers and brands. For consumers, there is plethora of user information about the brands, which reduces their purchase risk as well as helps them make a more considered choice. As for brands, instead of selling to nameless, faceless shoppers, companies can build relationships with real customers. Companies can also get direct feedback from their consumers enabling them to be prompt in improving the quality of their products or services. The company's promptness in taking in account consumer feedback in delivering quality products and services would eventually result in more and more loyal customers.

## LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the study has been done taking into account the methodological rigour, some limitations remain. The primary research for the study was conducted by using convenience sampling. Use of a convenience sample limits the generalisation of the inferences to the population.

In this research, many factors that could possibly influence brand loyalty were examined; due to practical limitations, many possible factors were also left out. Variables such as trust, commitment and word of mouth may have significant impact on brand loyalty and hence could be studied in future.

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