Achieving Brand Loyalty in Athletic Footwear Industry : Examining the Relationship of Annual Household Income with Brand Loyalty in the Post Covid Era

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Abstract

Brand loyalty is imperative for the firm as it increases the profitability and market share of its customers. Organizations devise numerous strategies like loyalty programs in order to motivate their loyal customers. But, it seems that brand loyalty landscape is shifting as studies show that consumers are re-treating from loyalty programs after the covid era. Through this study the organisations will be able to find the influence of annual household income on factors which affect brand loyalty in order to determine that financial situations have an impact on brand loyalty or not. The respondents included the physical education students and coaches who wear running shoes. The sample was collected from colleges which were affiliated to Punjabi University and Panjab University in Northern India. This research included four brands namely Reebok, Nike, Adidas and Puma. The relationship of household income on brand loyalty was found out in this research paper. Various analytical tests such as post-hoc analysis and kruskal wallis test were used. Numerous household categories reveal significant difference for numerous factors which have an effect on brand loyalty which are customer satisfaction, brand experience, brand commitment, perceived value and service quality that means there is an effect of household income on Brand loyalty. This research can provide insight to the marketers for enhancing Brand Loyalty

Key Words

Brand Loyalty, Household Income, Athletic Footwear, Customer Satisfaction, Brand Experience, Brand Commitment, Perceived Value, Service Quality

INTRODUCTION

Brand loyalty is deliberated as a major constituent of brand equity and represents a strategic asset. It has been able to grab a lot of attention in the literature review of various types of marketing research since a last seminal work conducted by Copeland (Copeland, 1923). This work was evaluated and completed 70 years ago. There has been substantial agreement on the theoretical definition of Brand Loyalty, but no combined view point has occurred till date (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978).

The consumer perceives that the goods which are offered by a particular company provide the good product features, image as well as good quality at the optimum price. If the company is able to provide all these, then it will lead to brand loyalty. In addition, advertisers must be able to understand the perception of the consumer. This will be helpful for the advertisers to make the customers acquire new habits and to reinforce those habits for a valuable repetitive purchase in the future.

Loyalty towards products and brands has declined in the 21st century due to the prevailing saturation of the existing market. The marketers are agitated as they are not able to differentiate their products (Mise *et al.*, 2013). Customers switch within brands and decide on purchase of brands equally in order to establish brand loyalty. Due to this, several elements affecting brand loyalty and brand management, needs to be studied. Brand loyalty is also discussed in terms of fondness of the consumer for purchasing a brand in any product related category (Giddens & Hofmann, 2010).

Although, brand loyalty has been researched and explored by marketing scholars and practitioners to a large extent, a detailed exploration is still needed. The scholars and marketers have faced several problems in studying and measuring brand loyalty. Companies have always tried to establish an extended relationship with their consumers in this highly competitive business. The customers will remain satisfied if they are content with the quality and service of the product. Also, it is important that the product offers value to the customers. If the company exceeds the service expectation of its consumers, the consumers gain loyalty for a particular brand for a long-time period. Companies have to provide good value for the products and services as the consumer has been provided with numerous brands by the market and therefore has many choices. The companies have to improve the value of the products and ensure that the customers are fully satisfied with them (Rad *et al.*, 2014). Brand image is imperative for the firms and significant

emphasis should be laid on it as it helps in developing fulfilment among its customers (Malik *et al.*, 2012).

The loyal customer stays with the organisation for an extensive time period and may generate more sales and profit in the future. The faithful customers stick to their brand for longer time and are expected to be engrossed in cross-purchase (Oliver, 1996; Reichheld, 1996). Enticing a new consumer becomes expensive for a firm rather than holding an old one (Blattberg and Deighton, 1996; Fites, 1996; Murphy, 1996; Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1984).The organizations need to build the customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in order to increase the long term profitability of the firm (Alsulami, 2021). Brand loyal consumers pay more money to brands of higher value or product/service providers (Reichheld, 1996). These types of behaviour of the brand loyal customers directly affect the profitability of the company.

The other factors which affect brand loyalty include price, perception of quality related to the product, quality of service, value in relation with brand and image of the particular brand (Mise *et al.*, 2013). The various factors which affected brand loyalty which of sport shoe brand which included advertisement, brand loyalty, brand trust, and perceived quality (Bisen and Nuangjamnong2021)

Athletic Footwear Industry

The global footwear giants which dominate the sports footwear category in India today are Puma, Adidas, Nike, Reebok and Lotto. These are known as the 'big five'. The 'big five' may have to face challenges by the new entrants in the near future. The unexpected launch of new and innovative athletic footwear offers a focused edge to manufacturers as customers are effectively searching for new innovative items which are driving the market development.

Increasing diseases like obesity, type 2 diabetes and hypertension are urging the individuals to enjoy different games and physical exercises which thus are supporting the expansion of athletic footwear market development. Numerous organizations are concentrating on developments like 3D printing that is helping in the development of athletic market. Adidas AG propelled tennis shoes in 2017, which had 3-D printed soles. Customization and personalization is playing a crucial role in the athletic footwear market. Nike Id by Nike, Inc. is assuming key job to help the offers of athletic footwear over the globe. Additionally, Nike had propelled the new running shoes called Zoom Pegasus Turbo which is a redesigned version of the Pegasus model. This model is motivated by Nike's Vaporfly Elite and four percent long distance race

shoes. As indicated by the brand, the shoe was worked to convey an inclination like the Pegasus however with the lightweight sensation of a racing flat.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alsulami (2021) stated that the organizations need to build the customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in order to increase the long term profitability of the firm.The supermarkets need to come up with more creative ideas in order to increase brand loyalty. This study explored the relation between customer satisfaction and bustomer loyalty in South Africa. The study showed the various factors which effect brand loyalty and these are variety of products location of the supermarket etc.

Bisen and Nuangjamnong (2021) examined the various factors which affected brand loyalty which of sport shoe brand which included advertisement, brand loyalty, brand trust and perceived quality. A total of 400 respondents participated in this study. Simple linear regression and multiple linear regression were used in this study.

Ramachandran and Balasubramanian (2020) stated that it is imperative to retain the old customers. The consumers are switching from one brand to another because of the competitive prices and discounts offered by the other brands. The consumers are becoming less loyal so it is important to study the moderating role of loyalty among consumers of technology products.

A total of 355 respondents filled the questionnaires in the United Arab Emirates. Multigroup moderation techniques and structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. This study analyzed the customer attitudes and intention of repurchase on various levels of Brand Loyalty.

Alkawaldeh and Eneizan (2018) expressed that it is imperative for the firm to focus towards brand loyalty in the market of durable goods so as to compete with different brands. The research found the effect of two constructs namely awareness related to the brand and image of a brand on loyalty towards brands. The questionnaires which were 200 in number were filled by the respondents. It was found that there was a critical impact of these constructs on brand loyalty. The study also provided the recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Hussein (2018) examined the direct and indirect effect of experience related to brand on brand loyalty. The concept of brand origin was explored in the casual dining restaurants of Indonesia. This paper investigated direct

effect of experience on brand loyalty. It was found that there was impact of brand experience on brand loyalty. Moreover, it showed an indirect impact through customer satisfaction. Confirmatory factor analysis, Cobel's test and covariance based structural equation modelling was used to find the outcomes. There was no diminishing effect of brand origin between brand experience and band loyalty.

Khadim *et al.* (2018) found the major impact of equity related to brand, communication regarding social media and trust of the brand on brand loyalty. The data was accumulated with the help of an online review which included internet based life gatherings like facebook, skype and twitter. Structural equation modelling was utilized in this investigation. The outcomes demonstrated that brand trust and brand experience assumed an interceding job between social media communication and brand loyalty. The marketing managers must comprehend the consumer behaviour of purchasing garments by increasing their understanding on social media communication and brand communities. The examination gave a model which consolidated both individual and social factors to build brand loyalty in the clothing industry.

Ganiyu (2017) inspected the connection amongst advertising and loyalty towards brand. Perceived quality and brand trust were incorporated as the interceding dimensions. Correlation and regression analysis were utilized as the analytical tools. The questionnaires were utilized to gather the data. There was a moderate impact of advertising on brand loyalty. The findings proposed that increasingly perplexing research should be done in the marketing environment.

Mohammad (2017) analyzed the effect of experience with the brand, equity related to brand and corporate branding on brand loyalty. 413 employees were chosen randomly from ten companies of Jordan and questionnaires were appropriated to them. The research paper had three independent variables namely experiences of brand, equity of brand and branding. The dependent variable considered for the study was brand loyalty. The results stated that there was a substantial impact of independent variables on loyalty towards brand, except the two variables which include sensory and cognitive experiences.

Acharya and Gupta (2014) aimed to examine the influence of peer pressure on brand switching. The four categories of product explored in the study include deodorant, movie theatre, mobile network and ice-cream. The outcomes explained that peer influence was correlated with switching of brands by the consumer.

Arora (2013) talked about the importance of brand loyalty in marketing. Brand loyalty is multi-dimensional idea which is controlled by psychological procedures. Repurchase behaviour of a brand is not the adequate condition to quantify Brand Loyalty. This study analysed the types of brand loyalty and factors impacting it. Likewise, it accommodated the past confirmations so as to produce new theoretical research on brand loyalty.

Malhotra *et al.* (2010) laid emphasis on commitment which is an important construct for measuring customer loyalty. The study stated that building a relationship with the customer was important for maintaining brand loyalty. The customer switching behaviour is also known as defection. Due to dissatisfaction, defection can occur. According to the study, the switching costs can be of two types i.e. implicit and explicit and it can be monetary as well as non-monetary.

Klein *et al.* (2008) found that the vertically integrated marketing channel system with the distribution channel system lead to better consumer responses and brand loyalty in comparison with the non-vertical marketing channel. Brand loyalty was responsible for attaining competitive edge over the other firms and is also related to brand equity. The outcomes found the relationship of hedonic and utilitarian approach with brand loyalty. The retail channels were important to build brand loyalty.

Prakash *et al.* (1993) focused on the concept of loyalty in relation to the service sector. The experiences of loyalty related to the brand were discussed in this paper. 475 customers filled the questionnaire which is related to cellular network providers. The brand loyalty antecedents were service quality, trust, commitment and satisfaction. The study suggested the importance of customer retention in the telecommunication sector. The operators must devise customer loyalty programs to escalate brand loyalty. The programs should be innovative so that more customers are attracted towards the products. Moreover, the managers should focus more on devising new marketing strategies to enhance brand loyalty.

Gabszewicz *et al.* (1992) addressed the competitive advantage of brand loyalty that early entrants enjoy over later rival. Brand loyalty was associated with the first mover advantage for a long-time. This paper discussed the strategies which the new entrant applied in order to enter the market. According to this study, low introductory price was a wonderful pricing strategy for the new entrant. Also, the study suggested that brand loyalty confers to the first

mover advantage.

Mannering and Winston (1991) discussed about the decline in the automobile industry in America. According to this study, the major source of decline of US manufacturers was the decline in brand loyalty. It stated that brand loyalty was the biggest challenge faced by US firms and its correction was most important. Brand reputation which is made gradually had an impact on brand loyalty.

Wernerfelt (1991) discussed about the two types of brand loyalty which are inertial and cost based brand loyalty. According to him, inertial brand loyalty occurred due to time lags in awareness but the brand loyalty which results from inter temporal utility effects was cost based brand loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between annual household income and factors affecting brand loyalty of sport shoes among sportspersons.

Hypothesis

H_{01} Null Hypothesis : There is no significant difference between factors affecting Brand Loyalty and monthly household income.

H_{02} Alternate Hypothesis : There is significant difference between factors affecting Brand Loyalty and monthly household income.

Sample Size and Sampling Unit

This study was conducted on shoes which physical education students wear for the purpose of running. Reebok, Nike, Adidas and Puma were the four brands selected for the study. 782 respondents wereconsidered for the study who were sportspersons (physical education students and coaches). They were selected as respondents as they use sport shoes for the purpose of warming up before starting any game.

Data Sampling Technique and Data Collection

The essential requirement of this study was to choose appropriate respondents i.e. sportspersons a Purposive sampling technique was used in this research. The respondents were taken from numerous colleges affiliated to Punjabi University and Panjab University in Northern India.

Questionnaire Development

63 statements were used to form a structured questionnaire. Five point Likert scale was used to answer these statements.The method which distinguished the loyal and non-loyal consumers was the proportion of purchase method. The questionnaire contained the statements from certain previous studies (Lau, Chang, Moon and Liu 2006[16]; Linh and Hsu 2011; Sahin, Zehir and Kitapci 2011; Fullerton, 2005; Salciuview, Mockaitis and De Mattos, 2009; Aydin, Ozer and Arsil, 2005; Shukla 2004; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Pascale and AI Lin Lim 2003). The screening questions used in the questionnaire were "Do you wear branded shoes?" and "Do you use any of these shoe brands given below: Adidas, Nike, Puma, Reebok". Only those sportspersons who answered in an affirmative manner were asked to fill the final questionnaire.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability

The value of Cronbach alpha for all the 63 variables was 0.94 which means these statements were internally consistent.

Validity

Content validity of the questionnaire was done as the statements were chosen after doing extensive literature review. Also, sportsperson's feedback was taken into account during the pilot study and the variables were reviewed thoroughly.

Statistical Analysis Tools

The research used exploratory factor analysis to find the factors affecting loyalty towards brand. Kruskal wallis test and post hoc analysis were used in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factor analysis was conducted on the statements and it was found that eight factors affect brand loyalty which include customer satisfaction, perceived value, service quality, brand preference, brand commitment, brand experience, repurchase intention and brand positioning (Malhan, Khanna and Anjum, 2018).
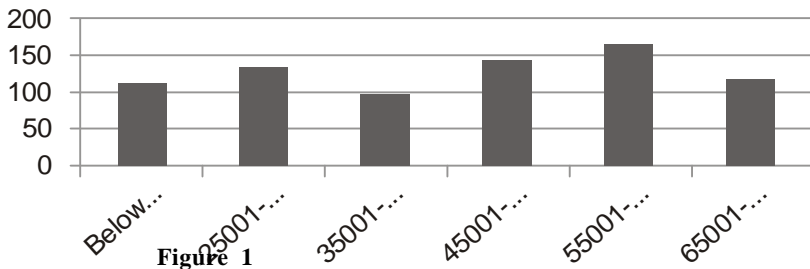
The results and discussion of this research paper are done in an elaborative manner.

Table 1

Total Respondents with Different Categories of Household Income

Monthly Household Income	Number of Respondents
Below 25000	115
25001-35000	136
35001-45000	99
45001-55000	146
55001-65000	168
65001-above	118
Total	782

Figure 1

Graph of Total Number of Respondents with Different Household Income

According to the graph, 115 respondents have the household income below 25000, 136 respondents have household income between 25001-35000, 99 respondents have household income between 35001-45000, 146 respondents have household income between 45001-55000,168 respondents have household income between 55001-65000 and 118 respondents are having the house hold income of 65001 and above.

Table 2

Kruskal Wallis Test with Different Categories of Household Income

Test Statistics a,b	Customer Satisfaction	Brand Preference	Brand Commitment	Perceived Value	Brand Experience	Service Quality	Repurchase Intention	Brand Positioning
Chi-Square	19.77604	10.67886	11.08517	13.74194	23.94141	15.23032	14.8135	5.887543
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	0.001377	0.058132	0.049717	0.017334	0.000223	0.009422	0.01119	0.317316

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable : Monthly Household Income

Significant difference is there in monthly household income and factors affecting brand loyalty which are customer satisfaction, brand commitment, perceived value, brand experience, service quality and repurchase intention as the significant value for these factors are 0.00, 0.04, 0.01, 0.00, 0.00 and 0.01 which is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis remains rejected for these cases.

Games Howell Test with Different Categories of Household Income

Table 3

Games Howell Test with Different Categories of Household Income

Games-Howell				
Dependent Variable	**(I) Monthly Household Income**	**(J) Monthly Household Income**	**Mean Difference (I-J)**	**Sig.**
Customer Satisfaction	25001-35000	Below 25000	-0.35	.149
		35001-45000	**-0.59**	**0.000**
		45001-55000	-0.31	0.206
		55001-65000	-0.05	0.999
		65001-above	-0.23	0.568
	35001-45000	Below 25000	.591	0.000
		25001-35000	.235	0.160
		35001-45000	.272	0.024

		45001-55000	**.532**	**0.000**
		65001-above	**.361**	**0.001**
Brand Commitment	25001-35000	Below 25000	0.223	0.535
		35001-45000	0.101	0.966
		45001-55000	**0.361**	**0.027**
		55001-65000	0.241	0.245
		65001-above	0.279	0.345
Perceived Value	25001-35000	Below 25000	-0.083	0.993
		35001-45000	-0.252	0.094
		45001-55000	-0.162	0.394
		55001-65000	-0.028	1
		65001-above	**-0.353**	**0.004**
Brand Experience	25001-35000	Below 25000	-0.647	0.41
		35001-45000	-0.253	0.274
		45001-55000	**-0.316**	**0.02**
		55001-65000	-0.459	0.06
		65001-above	-0.302	0.065
Service Quality	Below 25000	25001-35000	**-0.483**	**0.005**
		35001-45000	-0.204	0.694
		45001-55000	-0.211	0.617
		55001-65000	-0.078	0.992
		65001-above	-0.242	0.507
	25001-35000	Below 25000	0.483	0.005
		35001-45000	0.278	0.195
		45001-55000	0.272	0.155
		55001-65000	**0.405**	**0.005**
		65001-above	0.241	0.331
		55001-65000	0.165	0.728
Repurchase Intention	45001-55000	Below 25000	0.351	0.142
		25001-35000	0.298	0.052
		35001-45000	**0.398**	**0.009**
		55001-65000	0.291	0.099
		65001-above	0.244	0.304

* The Mean Difference is Significant at the 0.05 Level.

Monthly household income group categories were taken into consideration and it was found that 115 respondents had household income below 25000, 136 respondents had income group between 25001-35000, 99 respondents had income group between 35001-45000, 146 respondents had income group 45001-55000, 168 respondents had income group 55001-65000 and 118 respondents had income group of 65001 and above. Moreover, significant difference was shown in monthly household income groups towards the six factors namely customer satisfaction, brand commitment, perceived value, brand experience, service quality and repurchase intention

Significant difference was noted between the household income categories of 25001-35000 and 35001-45000 for customer satisfaction and the respondents having household income 35001-45000 are more satisfied as compared to the respondents having the household income of 25001-35000.

Significant difference was shown for household income category of 35001-45000 and 45001-55000 for customer satisfaction and the respondents having household income 35001-45000 had more customer satisfaction as compared to the respondents having household income category of 45001-55000.

The household income category of 35001-45000 and 65001 and above show significant difference for customer satisfaction and the respondents having household income 35001-45000 had more customer satisfaction as compared to the household income category of 65001 and above.

Moreover, the household income category of 25001-35000 and 45001-55000 show significant difference for brand commitment. It was revealed that the sportspersons having household income 25001-35000 have more brand commitment in comparison to the sportspersons having the household income category of 45001-55000.

Significant difference was shown for household income category of 25001-35000 and 65001 for perceived value. Also, it was observed that the respondents having household income 65001 and above had more perceived value as compared to the respondents of the category 25001-35000.

Moreover, significant difference was shown between household income category of 25001-35000 and 45001-55000 for brand experience. The respondents with a household income of 45001-55000 had better brand experience as compared to the respondents of the category 25001-35000.

The household income category of 25001-35000 and below 25000 and household income category 25001-35000 and 55001-65000 show significant difference towards the factor service quality. It was revealed that the sportspersons having household income category of 25001-35000 had better

service quality in comparison to the sportspersons having household income below 25000. Also, it was observed that the household income category of 25001-35000 had better service quality as compared to the respondents of the household income category of 55001-65000.

There was significant difference between household income categories of 45001-55000 and 35001-45000 towards repurchase intention. The respondents having household income 45001-55000 had better repurchase intention as compared to the respondents of the category 35001-45000.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to a research, a happy customer shares his experience with 9-10 people but a dissatisfied customer tends to share his or her opinion or experience with more than 20 customers. This is the main reason for many companies to focus on the brand loyalty factors in order to satisfy their customers and improve their sales. This research also determines the contributing factor towards brand loyalty of sport shoes. Managers can use this research to understand these factors in a better way.

The findings also show that there is significant difference between monthly household income and six factors affecting brand loyalty out of eight which are customer satisfaction, brand commitment, perceived value, brand experience, service quality and repurchase intention even in the era of digitalization. This emphasizes that household income of all categories are related to the factors affecting brand loyalty in Athletic footwear Industry.This research can provide insight to the marketers in order to increase Brand Loyalty as it elaborates the relationship between annual household income and Brand Loyalty.

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