

Environmental Stimuli of Social Media Marketing Activities Towards Generation Z Consumers

Sneha Kanade^{1*}, Bharathi K²

^{1*,2}Department of Management, Krupanidhi College of Management, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

Received:

30/09/2025

Revised:

07/10/2025

Accepted:

22/10/2025

Published:

30/10/2025

ABSTRACT

Research Purpose: Generation Z, informally known as Zoomers, is the segment following Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha. Analysts and well-known media utilize the mid-to-late 1990s as the initial birth years and the early 2010s as the final birth years. With the development of new media technologies, it is becoming simpler for brands to communicate and engage with shoppers, trying to build brand loyalty. One pattern gaining popularity is the utilization of online branded communities, meticulously designed informal networks with a focus (direct or indirect) on a brand. Specific groups tend to provide more distinct value to the brand owner and the members, allowing for greater communication and collaboration around the brand. Involving the Uses and Gratifications Theory as a theoretical framework, this study set out to explore the impact that online brand communities have on members' brand loyalty. **Methods:** Convenience sampling is used by the researcher for the study. Exogenous variables for the study are online virtual communities and SMMA – (Social Media Marketing Activities - Interaction and Entertainment). The endogenous variable is brand loyalty of Gen Z consumers. A sample of 225 customers was used, applying the SEM modelling approach, and the method used was a survey administered in the form of an online questionnaire given to members of online brand communities. **Key Findings:** The findings of the research suggest that brand loyalty mediates the relationship between SMMA and Online Virtual Communities. **Implications:** Online brand communities and social media marketing activities strengthen Gen Z's brand loyalty. Brands should focus on interactive, engaging communities to build lasting consumer relationships.

Keywords: Online virtual community, brand loyalty, Generation Z consumer, interaction, Entertainment

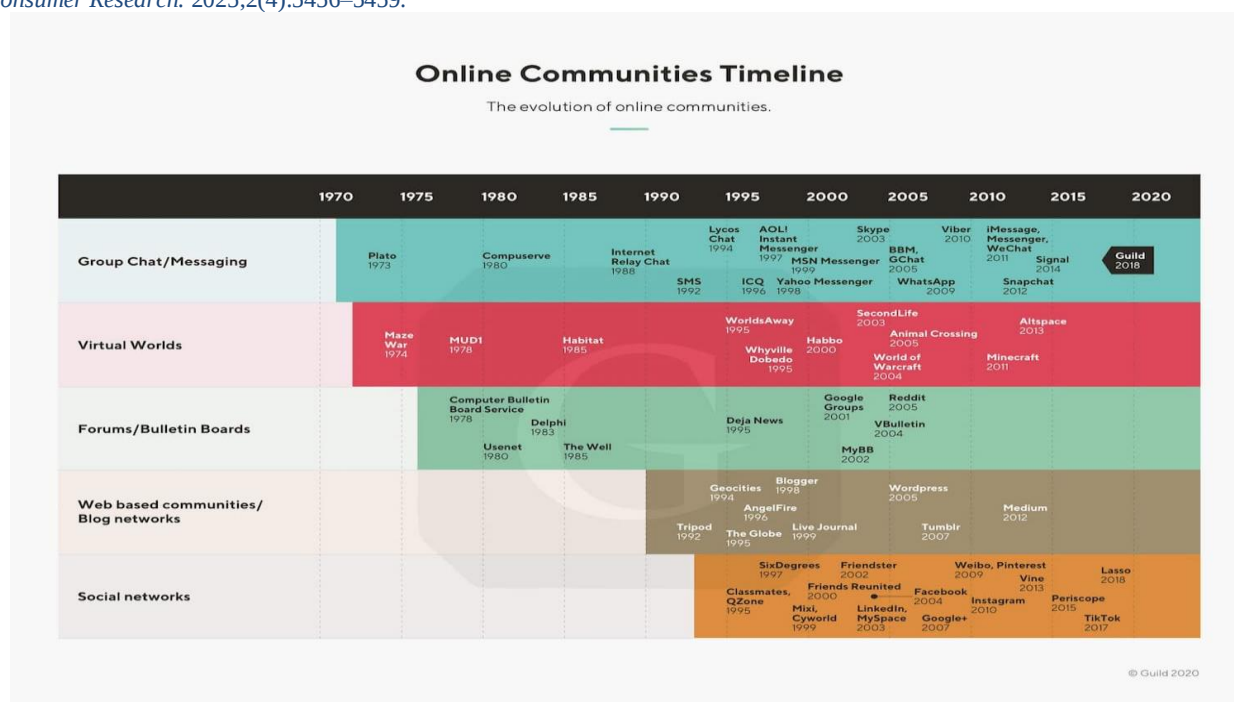


© 2025 by the authors; licensee Advances in Consumer Research. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-ND) license(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

INTRODUCTION

An Online Community (otherwise called a virtual community, web community, or digital community) is a space where individuals meet up digitally to connect, share information, and build relationships. Online communities are generally comprised of individuals who share similar interests or goals, whether it's raising funds for a charitable cause, working on a project

together, offering each other advice on how best to accomplish something, or simply sharing a passion (Figure 1). Virtual communities offer individuals a safe place to discuss common challenges, find solutions, and share stories. As people connect, they can support one another and build rapport through their shared experiences. A virtual community also gives everyone a voice (Edosomwan, 2011; Onder et al., 2020; Chuah et al., 2020).



Source: <https://guild.co/blog/what-is-online-community/>
Figure 1. The evolution of online communities

Social media interaction refers to the ways in which individuals and organizations engage with each other and with content on social media platforms (Brubaker et al., 2018). It encompasses a wide range of activities and can have various purposes, including personal communication, networking, marketing, and advocacy. Here are some key aspects of social media interaction:

Posting content: Users share text, images, videos, links, and other types of content on their profiles or pages. This content can be personal updates, news articles, promotional material, or anything else that aligns with their goals.

Engagement: Engagement includes actions like liking, commenting, and sharing others' posts. These interactions help users connect and build relationships with others on the platform.

Messaging: Many social media platforms offer direct messaging features that enable private conversations between users. This is often used for personal communication and business inquiries.

Following/Friending: Users can choose to follow or friend other users or accounts, which means they will see that user's content in their feed. This is a fundamental way of building a network on social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Phua et al. (2020) highlighted that social media provides the benefits of long-term engagement between brands and consumers. It also offers an opportunity for everyone to communicate effectively and efficiently in a way unmatched by any other medium. It can be considered the communication tool of the modern age.

Duffett (2017) studied the effectiveness of placing brand communication on social networking sites, which showed that there is an impact of online comments and reviews of products/brands on consumers' buying behaviour. The study revealed that people do come across various advertisements on social networking sites and also prefer to go through online comments and reviews regarding the brand/products before making a purchase. For them, brand communication on social networking sites plays a significant role in influencing their buying behaviour.

Lee et al. (2021) examined the perceptions of students on a China-based academic library's online video marketing campaign. Their study revealed that the posted content, the humor embedded within the content, use of social media, and interactive engagement with students were the key success factors of the campaign being examined.

Insignia discusses several social media attacks that some brands have experienced. They suggest that brands should be cautious—monitoring relevant social media content, avoiding frauds, and carefully managing any negative threads circulating across social platforms. They generally emphasize the sensible use of available legal tools to combat negative content related to them circulating over social media sites.

Tsitsi et al. (2013) examined the SMM models used by South African banks to establish an online presence. While on one hand, the use of SMM is encouraged, on the other, several legal factors emerge as barriers to its acceptance. Although gradually diffusing, these banks are pursuing SMM primarily through Facebook and Twitter.

The web revolution has transformed all sectors of human life. It has significantly impacted how we shop, bank, study, entertain, govern, and even wage war between nations. Marketing strategies adopted by companies are finding new directions in recent times with the help of the internet, and social media marketing is the latest addition to online marketing (Froget et al., 2022). Social media is generally seen as a medium to socialize and connect with family and friends online by Gen Z. It is the most commonly used communication platform among youth. However, it is not just limited to casual chats and socializing. Social networking has entered the boardrooms of organizations, much like how the internet transformed the modern business world.

Eisend (2022) states that organizations are writing success stories with the help of social media, while some are struggling to find their way online. Various companies are using social media to advertise their products and services. This study is intended to explore the impact of social media marketing among youth. The study examines social media as an emerging marketing tool.

Developed countries are far ahead in social networking due to the lifestyle of their people and advanced communication networks. India, being a developing country, is likely to make more progress in the area of social networking in the coming years. The country is witnessing rapid development in communication technology. It is expected that in the near future, India will surpass developed countries in the number of social media users. The corporate world is also preparing itself for this scenario. Companies find it easier to reach customers through social media platforms.

Social media marketing is recognized as an emerging marketing tool. Unlike traditional marketing tools,

social media provides two-way communication. Customers can interact with the company through private messages, comments, likes, posts, and so on. Social media marketing can reach a larger audience than traditional marketing tools. It does not have the constraints of boundaries or regulations. It can reach a wide audience in a short time. Therefore, social media is important for today's corporate world.

The objective of the study was (1) to determine the impact of online virtual communities on brand loyalty of Generation Z Consumers. (2) To establish relationship between Brand Loyalty and Generation Z Consumers with reference to Social Media Marketing Activities.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant impact of Online Virtual Communities and Social Media Marketing Activities (Interaction, Entertainment) on Brand Loyalty of Generation Z Consumers.

METHODOLOGY

Convenience sampling was used for the research to collect the data. A sample consisting of 225 customers was constructed using the SEM modelling approach, and the method used was a survey administered in the form of an online questionnaire to members of online brand communities. The consistency of the questionnaire was confirmed through a reliability test. The association between online virtual communities, social media marketing activities (Interaction and Entertainment), and brand loyalty of the consumers, and the authentication of the explicit hypothesis proposed in this study, has been verified with the help of SEM. Additionally, the outcomes were analytically processed through SPSS version 17.3 and SPSS Analysis of Moment Structures version 22.

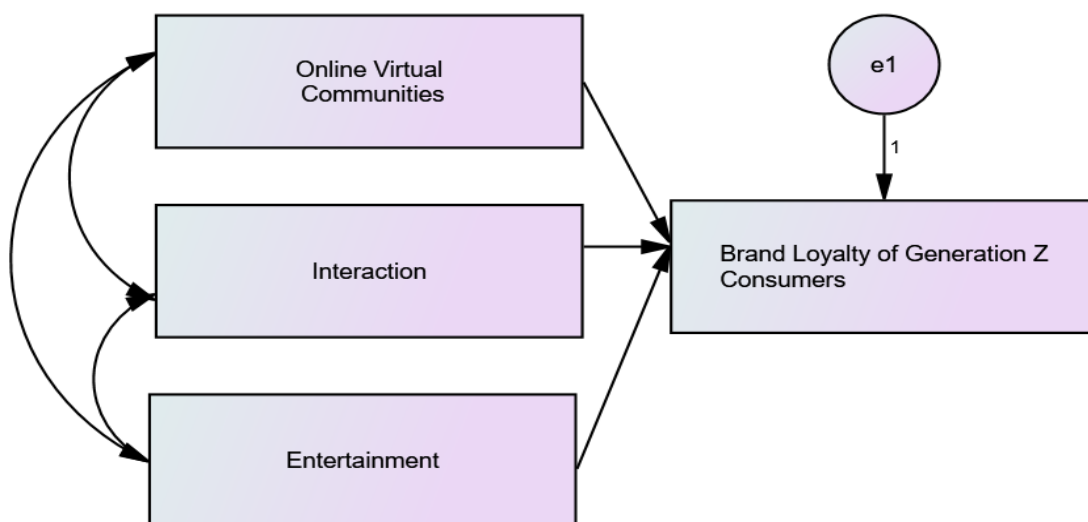


Figure 2. SEM -Path model

To know the impact of the association between social media marketing activities (Interaction and Entertainment), online virtual communities, and brand loyalty of the consumers, SEM was used. The table illustrates the suitable analytical outcomes. According

to the outcomes, the value of X^2/df (<2), high values of AGFI, GFI, CFI, NFI, TLI (greater than 0.9), and RMSEA (less than 0.08), it can be determined that the SEM model revealed in Figure 2 is suitable and can be confirmed for the hypothesis.

Table 1: Statistics Result of Path model

	X^2	X^2/df	GFI	AGFI	SRMR	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	TLI
Obtained values	49.244	1.235	0.925	0.902	0.038	0.069	0.981	0.925	0.978
Recommended values	$p > .05$	≤ 3.00	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.80	≤ 0.08	≤ 0.08	≥ 0.95	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90

DISCUSSION

The outcomes shown in Table 1 indicate a good goodness of fit in the path model. There is a significant association between online virtual communities and social media marketing activities on brand loyalty. These associations are strongly supported by the statistically significant regression coefficient β (beta), with a value of $p < 0.01$. The research results show a significant impact of online virtual communities and social media marketing activities on brand loyalty of Generation Z customers. The shaped path model can be useful across different types of platforms.

To build customer loyalty, the web-based virtual community section within the organization's landing page ought to provide the following features: stimulate members' level of interaction, for example, through discussion channels and bulletin boards where individuals can share their past experiences, increase members' interest, and provide more opportunities to suggest personal ideas. The rise of the dynamic customer is a long-term economic trend. Strategies for conducting business are changing continuously. It is challenging to capture online customer brand loyalty for electronic businesses, as customers' needs change constantly. Electronic businesses that seek to attract online customers may need to be prepared to provide them with relevant information at the time it is needed, in order to fully capture their interest.

CONCLUSION

Brand loyalty structure has been recorded as an effective strategy for creating and maintaining customer relationships. Previous studies have discovered that brand communities facilitate the development of brand loyalty and long-term relationships with potential customers. The current study investigated the role of customer engagement in online brand communities and its impact on brand loyalty. This research model was constructed and tested to enhance our understanding by exploring how brand loyalty is developed through customer engagement in these online SMMAAs. It is expected that this study will provide several insights for researchers to further investigate the role of customer engagement in social media.

REFERENCES

1. Brubaker, P. J., Church, S. H., Hansen, J., Pelham, S., & Ostler, A. (2018). One does not simply meme about organizations: Exploring the content creation strategies of user-generated memes on Imgur. *Public relations review*, 44(5), 741-751.
2. Chuah, K. M., Kahar, Y. M., & Ch'ng, L. C. (2020). We 'meme'business: Exploring Malaysian youths' interpretation of Internet memes in social media marketing. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 21(2), 931-944.
3. Duffett, R. G. (2017). Influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes. *Young Consumers*, 18(1), 19-39.
4. Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S. K., Kouame, D., Watson, J., & Seymour, T. (2011). The history of social media and its impact on business. *Journal of Applied Management and entrepreneurship*, 16(3), 79.
5. Eisend, M. (2022). The influence of humor in advertising: Explaining the effects of humor in two-sided messages. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(5), 962-973.
6. Froget, J. R. L., Baghestan, A. G., & Asfaranjan, Y. S. (2013). A uses and gratification perspective on social media usage and online marketing. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 15(1), 134-145.
7. Lee, M., Hong, J. H., Chung, S., & Back, K. J. (2021). Exploring the roles of DMO's social media efforts and information richness on customer engagement: empirical analysis on Facebook event pages. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(3), 670-686.
8. Önder, I., Gunter, U., & Gindl, S. (2020). Utilizing Facebook statistics in tourism demand modeling and destination marketing. *Journal of Travel Research*, 59(2), 195-208.
9. Phua, P., Kennedy, R., Trinh, G., Page, B., & Hartnett, N. (2020). Examining older consumers' loyalty towards older brands in grocery retailing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 52, 101893.
10. Tsitsi Chikandiwa, S., Contogiannis, E., & Jembere, E. (2013). The adoption of social media marketing in South African banks. *European business review*, 25(4), 365-381.