

# IMPROVING ATTITUDINAL LOYALTY THROUGH INFLUENCER MEDIATED BRAND EXPERIENCES

A literature review

Bachelor's Thesis  
Sanni Väinölä  
Aalto University School of Business  
Marketing  
Fall 2021

---

<b>Author</b>	Sanni Väinölä	
<b>Title of thesis</b>	Improving attitudinal loyalty through influencer mediated brand experiences	
<b>Degree</b>	Bachelor's degree	
<b>Degree programme</b>	Marketing	
<b>Thesis advisor(s)</b>	Hedon Blakaj	
<b>Year of approval</b>	<b>Number of pages</b>	<b>Language</b>
2021	33	English

---

### Abstract

Brand loyalty has been in the interest of marketers for decades since it can be seen as one of the main assets of brand equity. Brand loyalty as a concept in existing literature has been widely addressed through the act of repeatedly purchasing but the drivers of lasting brand loyalty lay in the attitudinal aspects of it.

The first notion of this literature review is to focus on the different manifestations of loyalty and on the gradual formation process of it, as an objective to answer the question of how consumers become loyal to a brand in the first place. The connection between brand experiences and loyalty will also be investigated since brand loyalty extensively stems from brand experiences. This will be discussed through the direct and indirect effects brand experiences have on the attitudinal and behavioral aspects of loyalty.

The second notion comes from adding influencers as mediators in-between brand experiences and brand loyalty. Despite the increasing utilization of influencers as marketing tools in the social media context, only little research has been done to comprehensively study the impact influencers have on brand assets. Thus, the purpose of this literature review is to address the research gap on this matter. The main argument regarding the role of influencers as mediators of brand experiences is that they can enhance the attitudinal aspects of brand experiences in a way which will likely unfold into loyalty.

This literature review will start off by conceptualizing brand experiences and connecting them to the digital context. Then, the concept and formation process of brand loyalty is explicated. The last contribution is to examine these two concepts in the social media context especially through the effects of communication where the necessity of influencers is also identified.

---

**Keywords** brand loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, behavioral loyalty, affective loyalty, cognitive loyalty, brand experience, brand commitment, brand attachment, influencer

---

# Table of Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Brand experiences</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Brand experiences and brand equity	4
2.2 Brand experiences in digital context	6
<b>3 Brand loyalty</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Defining brand loyalty	8
3.2 Attitudinal and behavioral loyalty	10
3.3 Brand experiences connection to loyalty	13
<b>4 Improving loyalty through influencers</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Marketing communications in social media	17
4.2 Influencers as brand experience mediators	18
4.2.1 Enhancing affective aspects	21
4.2.2 Enhancing cognitive aspects	23
<b>5 Discussion</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>6 References</b>	<b>27</b>

# 1 Introduction

*“A brand experience perceived as superior by consumers will only lead to true brand loyalty if affective commitment between the brand and its customers has also been developed.”*

*(Iglesias, Singh & Batista-Foguet, 2011)*

Brand loyalty as something to attain has been the objective of companies for a long time for seemingly obvious reasons. Brand loyalty is considered as one of the assets of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2002) denoting that through repeatedly purchasing loyal customers turns into continuous revenue streams for a company (Aaker, 1991). However, as this thesis will discuss, the loyalty concept isn't that unambiguous and customer loyalty's linkage to financial outcome is rather complex (Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006).

Brand loyalty has been addressed through different theoretical positions. More precisely, the existing literature has had focus on *behavioral loyalty* and *attitudinal loyalty* (e.g., Oliver, 1997 & 1999; Dick and Basu, 1994; Day, 1969; Jacoby and Kyner, 1973) and due to the multidimensionality of attitudinal aspects, understanding of the complex antecedents of loyalty (cognition, affection, and commitment) needs to be further investigated. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the research question,

**“How consumers become loyal to brands?”**

Importantly, loyalty stems from brand experiences which appear as part of a brand's characteristics and marketing actions in different environments (Brakus et al., 2009). Brand experiences have been studied more in physical contexts, and less so in digital environments. However, digitalization and the advent of social media platforms has greatly affected how brand loyalty is fostered; thus therefore, this thesis will investigate brand experiences in social media context. Despite the number of studies on this matter, we still lack a better understanding of it.

Nonetheless, with social media the central problem is that customers have only little interest in branded content (Holt, 2016), which is why brands are increasingly utilizing influencers in

communication activities (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Hence, this thesis also seeks to answer the research question,

**“How loyalty can be improved in social media  
through brand experiences provided by influencers?”**

As this thesis proceeds, the major importance of affective aspects on improving attitudinal loyalty (and thereby behavioral loyalty also) is recognized, and extensive focus on that matter will be done. For this reason, two concepts related to loyalty, *brand attachment* (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Malär et al., 2011) and *brand commitment* (e.g., Fullerton, 2003; Evanschitzky and Wunderlic, 2006), will also be shortly viewed to make a comprehensive enough look on the formation process of brand loyalty.

Thus, this paper will be structured followingly. First, it will introduce the concept of brand experience and the connection of it on brand equity and more precisely on brand loyalty, as it is considered as the core of brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Also, this chapter will shortly view brand experiences in digital context. Secondly, there will be broad discussion about brand loyalty – attitudinal and behavioral aspects of it particularly, followed by explanation of the direct and indirect effects brand experiences have on loyalty. The whole connection between brand experiences and brand loyalty will be illustrated in a figure at the end of the second chapter. The third chapter will add influencers on this equation as mediating variables on conveying brand experiences leading to brand loyalty. Lastly, this thesis will aggregate the conclusions discovered to point out some theoretical and managerial implications, additionally identifying limitations and suggestions for future research.

## 2 Brand experiences

### 2.1 Brand experiences and brand equity

Even though customer experience as the key issue to be managed is rather recent topic among marketing academics and practitioners (Iglesias et al., 2011) understanding how consumers experience brands is what marketing practitioners have come to realize is critical when planning of products and services' marketing strategies (Brakus et al., 2009). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) even suggest that the brand itself becomes the experience which reflects the extent of the concept. This extent can be also seen with Brakus et al. (2009, p. 52) definition of the concept as,

“Sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.”

Schmitt (1999) similarly divides experiences in five modules: *sense, feel, think, act, and relate*. The impact of 'sense' comes from appealing to the senses or creating sensory experience, whereas 'feel' is about creating affective experiences by evoking customer's feelings and emotions (Schmitt, 1999). 'Think' aims to create problem-solving experiences in order to engage the customer creatively, and 'act' wants to change the behaviors or even lifestyles of customers (Schmitt, 1999). The final module 'relate' contains all the other modules, but in addition, it appeals to customer's need to be perceived positively by others in a broader social system (Schmitt, 1999).

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) state that with experiences the consequences of consumption appear as the affective response's consumers get or are evoked by the product, these being the fun, the enjoyment, and the pleasure. However, these experiences may also vary in valence, that is, some are considered more positive than others and some may be experienced even as negative (Brakus et al., 2009).

Consumers are exposed to various brand-related stimuli (Brakus et al., 200) which, for example, consists of brand-identifying colors, shapes, typefaces, background elements, and

slogans (Brakus et al., 2009). Similar concept for brand-related stimuli is the overall brand elements, which serve to identify and differentiate the brand (Keller, 2002). Examples of these are brand names, logos, symbols, characters, slogans, jingles, and packages (Aaker, 1991). According to Brakus et al. (2009), the brand-related stimuli evoking brand experiences, however, appear as part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, and marketing communications and in environments in which the brand is marketed.

Importantly, brand experiences strongly relate to brand equity. Brand equity has been determined as the added value provided by a product (or service) to a firm or its customers that consists of a set of brand assets or liabilities linked to a brand, these being: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2002). Brand and its elements (such as names, logos, symbols, slogans, packages) are the instruments of building brand equity (Keller, 2002) which similarly can be seen as the evoking assets of brand experiences, as mentioned before, the brand-related stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009). Brand experiences also have direct connection on brand loyalty which is mediated by satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009) but this will be discussed more in the following chapter. Thus, brand elements or brand-related stimuli can be seen as the mediating variables of both brand experience and brand equity.

According to Aaker (1991) brand loyalty, as one of the assets of brand equity is often the core it. Loyal customers can be seen as a set of habitual buyers that represent a revenue stream that can continue for a long time (Aaker, 1991), which again provides quantitative value for a company. For this reason, this thesis will focus on brand experiences as a way of building brand loyalty, since the better the overall brand experience is the more trust and loyalty towards the brand is enhance (Brakus et al., 2009).

According to Pullman and Gross (2004) experiences are inherently emotional and personal, and many factors affecting them are beyond the control of management. What Iglesias et al. (2011) similarly stated is that a brand experience will only lead to true brand loyalty if affective commitment between the brand and the customer exists, suggesting that when aiming to create loyal customers, brands need to work on the affective dimensions of their communications as well as of the entire brand experience. As this thesis proceeds, it can be noticed that the affective aspects of brand experience truly need to be highlighted, in order to create 'true' brand loyalty.

## **2.2 Brand experiences in digital context**

According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experiences occur in a variety of direct settings when consumers search for products, when they shop for them and receive service, and when they consume them (Brakus et al., 2009) – but also indirectly when consumers are exposed to advertising and marketing communications. Experiences occur through interaction with different elements that are created by a service provider that manifests in the form of sensations or knowledge acquisition (Gupta and Vajic, 1999). As one can deduce these contexts or settings can be both physical and digital.

With experience design and management, context indeed can be seen as the primary concern (Pullman and Gross, 2004). Bitner (1992), who defines contexts as servicescapes which are different kinds of environments, states that individuals react to places with two forms of behavior: approach (positive) and avoidance (negative). These behaviors are determined largely by an individual's internal responses to the environment, and these responses lead to different types of behavior (Bitner, 1992). According to Bitner (1992), approach includes behaviors such as coming in, staying, spending money, loyalty, and carrying out the purpose for being in the organization, for example. Similarly, Mehrabian and Russell (1974) suggested that factors from the environment, and emotions that are closely associated with an individual's personality, can affect primary emotional responses.

More recently, the importance of digital environments on providing customer experiences has manifested markedly. COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically driven consumers toward online platforms, making companies and industries respond to it, and move online (LaBerge et al., 2020). According to a survey made by LaBerge et al. (2020) these needs to work and interact with customers remotely required investments in data security and an accelerated migration to the cloud. Now when the investments have been made, in addition to removing some precrisis bottlenecks of virtual interactions, it can be expected that remote work and customer interaction will continue in the future. (LaBerge et al., 2020).

The impact of COVID-19 extends to social media also. The social media spending on marketing budgets have experienced a 74% increase during the period of February 2020 to



June 2020 (Moorman and McCarthy, 2021). Additionally, there is a historic return on companies' social media investments (Moorman and McCarthy, 2021), since according to a survey made by Moorman and McCarthy (2021) the self-reported contribution of social media to overall company performance has increased up to 24% since February 2020. Along with social media investments, chief marketing officers were planning to increasingly invest in online customer experiences in 2021 (Moorman and McCarthy, 2021). Concludingly, managing brand experiences in digital, and in social media more specifically, has become an essential topic due the pandemic. Also, it seems like investing in digital experiences is here to stay, which enhances the importance of comprehensive understanding on how brands can be managed in these environments.

As mentioned before, the connection between brand experiences and brand equity exists, meaning that there are also direct and indirect connections between brand experiences and brand loyalty, one of the assets of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2002). The concept of brand loyalty and the effects of brand experiences will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## 3 Brand loyalty

### 3.1 Defining brand loyalty

With different theories regarding branding and brand equity there have been divergent views on the topic. As mentioned before, this thesis has its focus on the attitudes of consumers, which are especially highlighted by the affective aspects. Emotional theories on branding have been largely noted in the literature; Fournier (1998), for example, managed to accent the importance of brands serving as viable relationships partners in a way which made an impact and started a stream of different studies on the subject. Also, plenty of other emotional brand concepts exist today such as *brand love* (Batra et al., 2012), *brand attachment* (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Malär et al., 2011), and *brand commitment* (e.g., Fullerton, 2003; Evanschitzky and Wunderlic, 2006). Ramaseshan and Stein (2014) define brand attachment and brand commitment as brand-relationship variables, and common for these concepts is that they have strong connections on brand loyalty (Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The earliest references to brand loyalty as a concept occurred in 1923 with Copeland's studies. The relevance of the brand loyalty research is supported by the fact that Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) reviewed over 200 studies regarding the topic only 55 years later the conception had been theoretically determined. Naturally, the stream of studies has increased even more so to this day.

Brand loyalty as a phenomenon is multidimensional (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973), which makes it challenging to unambiguously determine the concept. This can be seen, for example, with Oliver's (1997, p. 392) definition of loyalty, which is

“A deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.”

According to Jacoby and Kyner (1973) brand loyalty is expressed by a set of sufficient conditions, these being that brand loyalty is biased and behavioral response and a function of

psychological processes, which is expressed over time by some decision-making units with respect to one or more alternative brands.

For intelligible reasons brand loyalty has been widely studied in marketing literature. First, brand loyalty can turn into a set of quantitative values. In addition to repurchasing, loyal consumers are less likely to churn which again increases their value as customers (Aaker, 1991). Also, the cost of serving loyal customers is less, they are less price sensitive, and they spend more time with the company (Reichheld and Teal, 1996). In addition to quantitative values, brand loyalty also brings qualitative values to a company, such as positive word-of-mouth through perceived satisfaction (Anderson, 1998), and passing on recommendations (Reichheld and Teal, 1996).

Markedly, a recurring view in researchers' studies is that brand loyalty is strongly connected to repurchasing (e.g., Aaker, 1991; Amine, 1998; Oliver, 1997). Amine (1998), for example, mentions that brand loyalty as a concept has for a long time been understood as the act of consumers repeatedly buying the same brand. However, brand loyalty and repeated purchase behavior shouldn't be considered as one and the same. Jacoby and Kyner (1973) discussed this mentioning that brand loyalty and repeating purchases are mediated by different underlying dynamics. For example, one might be repeating purchases because they personally prefer the brand over others, but another might repeatedly purchase, not for their own preferences towards the brand, but instead their spouse's preferences, who requests to get the product from the store (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973). Since the decision-making has the possibility to entail more than one person, this might have impact on not being loyal in purchase behavior (Jacoby and Kyner, 1973). To conclude, repeatedly purchasing can be seen as one seminal characteristic or outcome of brand loyalty, but it doesn't automatically transfer into brand loyalty.

For this reason, the purpose of this thesis is to observe brand loyalty as something beyond the act of repeating purchases, and more as a psychological process forming from the initial attitudes of consumers. The next chapter will go more in detail in the antecedents of the actions of loyalty.

## 2.2 Attitudinal and behavioral loyalty

The two main dimensions of loyalty, attitudinal and behavioral, have been largely noted and studied in existing literature (e.g., Day, 1969; Jacoby and Chestnut 1978; Jacoby and Kyner, 1973; Oliver, 1997 & 1999). These dimensions will be more precisely defined next.

**Behavioral loyalty** takes the behavioral acts of the customer, primarily the act of repurchasing, into consideration and uses it as the only measurement of loyalty. Yim and Kannan (1999) separated behavioral loyalty in two different types: hard-core loyalty and reinforcing loyalty. Hard-core loyalty appears when a consumer exclusively repeats purchasing one product alternative, whereas reinforcing loyalty includes the possibility of switching among product alternatives, yet predominantly repeating purchasing one (or more) product alternatives to a significant extent (Yim and Kannan, 1999). With behavioral loyalty, however, the problem is that it doesn't take the psychological meaning of loyalty in consideration (Oliver, 1999).

Since different measures of behavioral loyalty were criticized for their lack of explanatory power (Fournier and Yao, 1997), the interest in attitudinal loyalty arose. **Attitudinal loyalty** can be seen as an internal disposition that sort of controls the act of repeating purchases (Day, 1969). Attitudinal loyalty is a more versatile definition for brand loyalty since it also captures both the affective and cognitive aspects of brand loyalty (Kumar and Shah, 2004) instead of only focusing on the apparent outcomes, which for a big part is the act of repurchasing.

As mentioned, affective loyalty consists of cognitive and affective aspects. **Cognitive loyalty** represents loyalty to information such as features and price, and it is based on a brand's performance aspects and levels (Oliver, 1999). According to Evanschitzky and Wunderlich (2006) cognitive loyalty is largely influenced by the consumer's evaluative responses to an experience, particularly to the perceived performance of an offering relative to price. **Affective loyalty** then again is based on consumer's affect-based attitudes to a product, and these attitudes to a product are based upon an established relationship between the consumer and the product (Yuksel et al., 2010). These two types of loyalty have proven to have a positive and significant link with each other (e.g., Evanschitzky and Wunderlich, 2006; Yuksel et al., 2010).

With attitudinal loyalty a problem arises, when the favorable attitude toward a particular brand does not always lead the customer to behave in a loyal way (Oliver, 1997; Dick and Basu, 1994). Also, attitudinal loyalty is seemingly rather complex to measure since it consists of the internal dispositions (Day, 1969). One way to measure attitudinal loyalty is through the level of satisfaction as an “affective summary response” towards the product or service (White and Yu, 2005). However, with satisfaction the problem is that satisfied customers don’t always act for affective reasons. Even satisfied customers may prefer another brand if they receive a better offer from it or find a better alternative (Nisar and Whitehead, 2016). Based on this, the affective aspects as antecedents of loyalty seem to be the most powerful on predicting real attitudinal loyalty.

**Table 1** – Comparison of behavioral and attitudinal loyalty

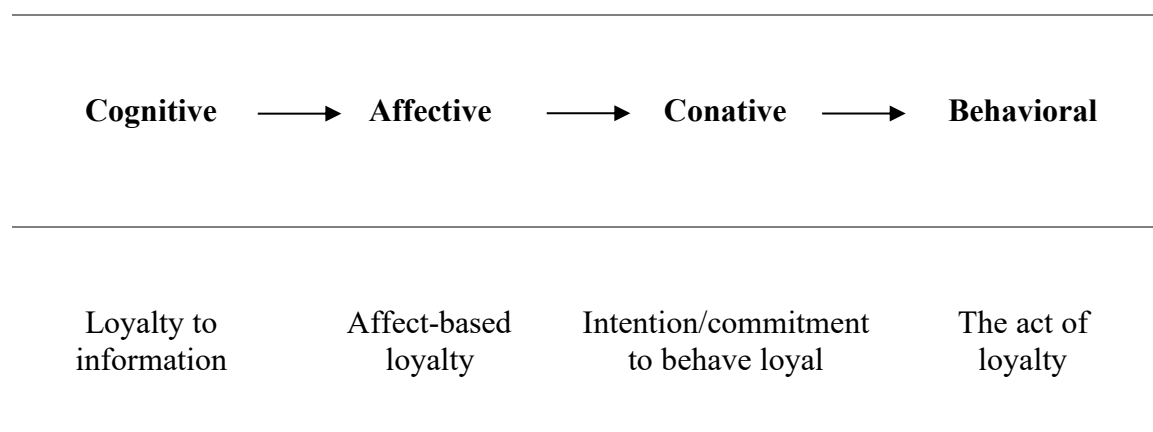
	<b>Behavioral loyalty</b>	<b>Attitudinal loyalty</b>
Definition	The <i>actions</i> of brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999)	The <i>internal dispositions</i> of brand loyalty (Day, 1969)
Outcomes	Purchasing and repurchasing (Yim & Kannan, 1999), word-of-mouth (Anderson, 1998), recommendations (Reiccheld & Teal, 1996)	Affective (emotional) and cognitive responses related to the psychological processes of loyalty (Kumar & Shah, 2004)
Criticism	Measures of it lack explanatory power (Fournier & Yao, 1997)	It is hard to measure, and it doesn’t always turn into behavioral loyalty (Oliver, 1997; Dick & Basu, 1994).

Dominant view on the matter today is that attitudinal and behavioral loyalty together form the concept of brand loyalty. Dick and Basu (1994) address this by stating that customer loyalty

can be viewed as the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and repeat patronage. With these studies, Dick and Basu (1994) defined four specific conditions related to loyalty, being *Loyalty*, *Latent Loyalty*, *Spurious Loyalty*, and *No Loyalty*. Loyalty, which is the most preferred of these four conditions, can be achieved primarily by having a high level of relative attitude and high level of repeat patronage (Dick and Basu, 1994), which highlights the importance of both aspects. Essential also is, that attitudinal loyalty eventually turns into behavioral loyalty, when attitudinal loyalty becomes the behavior of interest, also known as the action state of inertial rebuying (Oliver, 1999).

Loyalty can also be seen as a gradual process where it increases through four levels in following order: cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral (Oliver, 1999; Oliver, 1997). Attitudinal loyalty consists of the cognitive and affective stages (Kumar and Shah, 2004) which were discussed in greater detail above. Conative loyalty then again is considered as an intention or commitment to behave toward a goal (here repurchasing, for example) in a particular manner (Oliver, 1997). Related concept of brand commitment will be discussed more in the following chapter. To visualize the gradual process of loyalty it is condensed in a Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1** – The gradual process of loyalty in stages



Note. Based on Oliver (1997); Oliver (1999); Yuksel et al., (2010)

### 3.3 Brand experiences connection on loyalty

Brand experiences' connection to brand loyalty has been investigated (e.g., Iglesias et al., 2011; Brakus et al., 2009; Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014) and in the light of the current literature brand experiences seem to have direct and indirect effects on loyalty. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate brand experiences as the antecedents of brand loyalty, and especially attitudinal loyalty.

Brand experiences' direct effect on loyalty is mediated by satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009). In fact, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction require experience with the product or service (Ha and Perks, 2005). When brand evokes positive experiences, it alone may lead to satisfaction – and moreover, since these experiences lead to enjoyable outcomes, one could expect that consumer wants to repeat these experiences over again, this again resulting in brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014). According to Brakus et al. (2009) experience may also be the basis for more elaborative information processing and inference making that results in brand-related association, which then again influences satisfaction and loyalty.

The indirect effects on brand loyalty happen through affective and psychological phenomena, such as attachment and commitment. Brand attachment and brand commitment, which are gone through next, are closely related concepts to brand loyalty and have overlap with each other.

First concentrating on **brand attachment**, Park et al. (2010) have defined it as the bond that connects the brand with the customer's self, this bond manifesting as a memory network involving thoughts and feelings about the brand and the brand relationship. Brand attachment is usually considered as an emotional and cognitive concept (e.g., Park et al., 2010; Malär et al., 2011). This kind of attachment forms through brand experiences that are symbolic, hedonic, and esthetic in consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Accordingly, when studying in-store brand experiences Dolbec and Chebat (2013) found out that in addition to positively influencing the general appreciation of a brand, the brand experience also strongly fosters a deeper attachment to these stores.

Central for brand attachment theory is the self-concept which can be seen as customers' habit to purchase and consume brands with a particular personality to express their self-concept (Malär et al., 2011) and to develop a sense of oneness with the brand (Park et al., 2011). The self-concept, also known as "self-congruence", can improve affective, attitudinal, and behavioral consumer responses to the brand (Malär et al., 2011; Aaker, 1999). Malär et al. (2011) suggest that brand attachment becomes higher through greater reflection of self-congruence and greater personal connections between the consumer and the brand.

**Brand commitment** then again can be seen as psychological and emotional attachment that a customer can have towards a brand (Thomson et al., 2005) which seemingly implies that there must be psychological and/or emotional attachment between the brand and the customer for brand commitment to exist. Although brand commitment relates to the concept of attachment, the difference of commitment comes from an implicit or explicit pledge to remain in the relationship in the future (Dwyer et al, 1987).

Regarding brand loyalty and the theoretical foundations of it explored in this thesis, Amine (1998) similarly has stated that in addition to consistent purchase behavior, brand loyalty includes an attitudinal component. What Amine (1998) also suggested is that this component is operationalized through the notion of commitment to a brand. Accordingly, commitment plays a central role in brand loyalty as it is a key variable for customer retention in the long-term perspective (Amine, 1998). Committed customers are less likely to switch compared to consumers lacking commitment (Fullerton, 2003), which again is a close definition of loyalty also.

Literature of brand commitment categorizes it in two which also reflects the psychological and emotional attachment of customers. These two different types of commitment are known as affective commitment and continuance/calculative commitment (Amine, 1998; Fullerton, 2003; Evanschitzky and Wunderlic, 2006).

***Affective commitment*** = Based on affective attachment and identification to an object, affective commitment expresses the extent to which a customer likes to maintain the relationship with a brand (Amine, 1998)



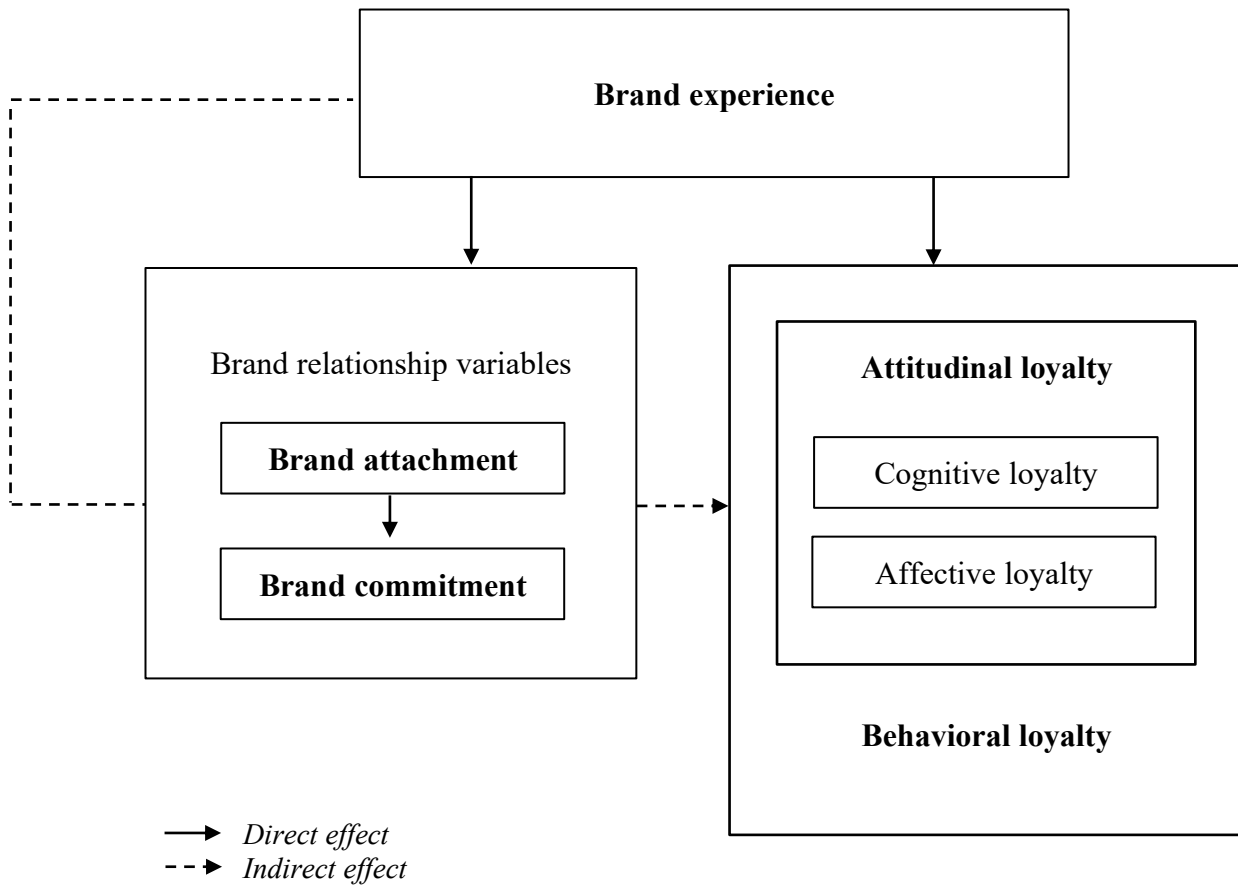
*Calculative (or continuance) commitment* = Consumer is loyal for opportunistic reasons, since the relationship is based mainly upon cognitive or psychological evaluation of the brand – consumer having a calculative/continuance commitment towards a brand maintains the loyal behaviors as long as the benefits of the brand exceed the costs of switching to another brand (Amine, 1998)

As one can deduct from the definitions of two different types of commitment, brand commitment in the form of continuance or calculative indicates how customers aren't always loyal even if they are committed. According to Jacoby and Kyner (1973) the categorizations of commitment are essential for distinguishing between brand loyalty and other forms of repeat purchasing. The contingent factors, such as lack of other alternatives (Park et al., 2008), might interrupt the purchasing of the usual brand (Amine, 1998). This again makes the affective side of commitment more valuable since it is a more powerful determinant of customer retention (Fullerton, 2003). According to Amine (1998) affective commitment may ensure longer term consistent behavior rather than calculative commitment since emotional motives of brand loyalty are more likely to result in stable and enduring relationship between consumers' and brands. This again emphasizes the affective and emotional aspects of both brand attachment and brand commitment.

Regarding brand experiences, Iglesias et al. (2011) find out that the better the experience, the higher the affective commitment towards a brand, also. Affective commitment seems to mediate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2011), and it can be even suggested that there must be an affective commitment between the brand and its customers developed for brand experiences lead to true brand loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2011).

In Figure 2 the relation of brand experience directly to brand loyalty and indirectly to other brand relationship variables (these being brand attachment and brand commitment) has been visualized. In this figure the brand experience indirectly influences loyalty through brand attachment leading to brand commitment or through brand attachment and/or brand commitment only. The direct effect appears when the brand experience straightforwardly impacts on loyalty due to satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009), for example.

**Figure 2** – Brand experiences’ direct and indirect effects on brand loyalty



Note. Adapted from Ramaseshan & Stein (2014); Based on Amine (1998), Park et al. (2008), Dolbec & Shebat (2013), Brakus et al. (2009) Ramaseshan & Stein (2014)

## **4 Improving loyalty through influencers**

### **4.1 Marketing communications in social media**

Social media has provided multiple marketing opportunities for brands since they may benefit from social media as an integrated component in a marketing communications campaign, as an ongoing corporate communications channel, and/or as a series of micro campaigns specifically designed for digital exposure (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). According to Ashley and Tuten (2015) communication in social media can be done through creative strategies that help to bridge the gap between what marketer wants to say and what the consumer needs to hear. The power of social media as a marketing tool also comes from the huge growth and availability of the Internet which enables companies to access a wide range of customers (Nisar and Whitehead, 2016). Social media in addition to traditional marketing communication can be seen as an exerting instrument on an important impact on a brand's success (Bruhn et al., 2012), and it has even been argued that consumers today value social media communication far more than traditional communication methods (Nisar and Whitehead, 2016). In a nutshell, the importance of communication highlights in digital environment especially due to the abilities to be even more creative with communication activities compared to traditional methods, and due to the accessibility to a huge range of consumers receiving these messages.

The effect of communication on brand equity has been investigated, and the relationship between these two is that communication is identified as one of the sources driving brand equity (Simon and Sullivan, 1993). This can be explained by consumers comparing communication stimuli with their stored knowledge of comparable communication activities (Bruhn et al., 2012). Communication stimuli triggers a positive effect in consumers, so that their perception of the communication positively influence the awareness and image of the brand (Bruhn et al., 2012). What Kelman (1958) suggests is that through communication there is even an ability to change person's attitude and beliefs. Communication also affects brand loyalty by increasing the probability that a brand will be incorporated into a customer's consideration set, simplifying the consumer's brand choice, and making it as a habit to choose the brand (Yoo et al., 2000). According to Ball et al. (2004), helpful, clear, and personalized information and advice in addition to satisfaction and trust enhance loyalty, to a significant extent. As mentioned earlier, satisfaction itself has direct effects on loyalty too (Brakus et al., 2009). Thus, concludingly, for

companies to manage loyalty, attitudinal loyalty particularly, it would be essential to focus on communication related issues.

The role of communication also enhances with the overall brand experiences, since brand-related stimuli appears as communication evoking brand experiences among other variables (i.e., brand's design and identity, packaging, and environments) (Brakus et al., 2009). As mentioned earlier, the moment when consumers are exposed to advertising and marketing communications is the moment when brand experiences appear indirectly (Brakus et al., 2009). Social media marketing actions can mostly be considered as indirect brand experiences – direct experiences would occur if the customer used social media for the search process of a brand or product, received service through social media, or consumed a brand through social media (Brakus et al., 2009). And as this thesis is next going to focus on influencers, the communication between influencers and consumers can be only considered as an indirect brand experience, since there isn't any direct contact between the customer and the brand – influencers operate as mediators between them.

## **4.2 Influencers as brand experience mediators**

The importance of influencers as brand experience mediators is emphasized by the fact that consumers have only little interest in content provided by brands, and this content can even be seen as clutter in the eyes of consumers (Holt, 2016). Real life examples give substantial insights on the matter, as by the end of the year 2021, the most followed YouTuber PewDiePie had 110 million subscribers, whereas Coca-Cola, one of the most well-known brands, had only 3.65 million subscribers on YouTube. This without a doubt is a big problem from the perspective of companies, since even if they do have the opportunity to engage with a wide range of consumers in digital contexts, the opportunity is rather unavailing if customers see branded content as clutter.

Companies have tried to tackle this problem by hiring social media ambassadors or sponsoring celebrities (Holt, 2016), but recently the popularity of using influencers in marketing has been growing exponentially (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Influencers are often identified with the number of followers they have (Wong, 2014), but in addition, influencers generally have knowledge or

even expertise on specific areas, for instance, travel, food, lifestyle, beauty, or fashion (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Wong, 2014). Also, important aspect when defining an influencer is the strength of the relationship that influencer has with his/her followers (Wong, 2014).

However, despite the exponentially growing use of influencers for brand endorsement, the scientific knowledge on their marketing values is limited and the impact of influencer endorsement on brand responses is relatively understudied (Schouten et al., 2019). There have been more studies on human brands instead, which can be defined to refer to any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communication efforts (Rindova et al., 2006). This in fact is a similar definition for an influencer as they can be seen as ‘online celebrities’ creating content and communicating with their followers in social media (Lou and Yuan, 2019), which is why this thesis is going to utilize existing studies on human brands when discussing about the role of influencers as brand experience providers.

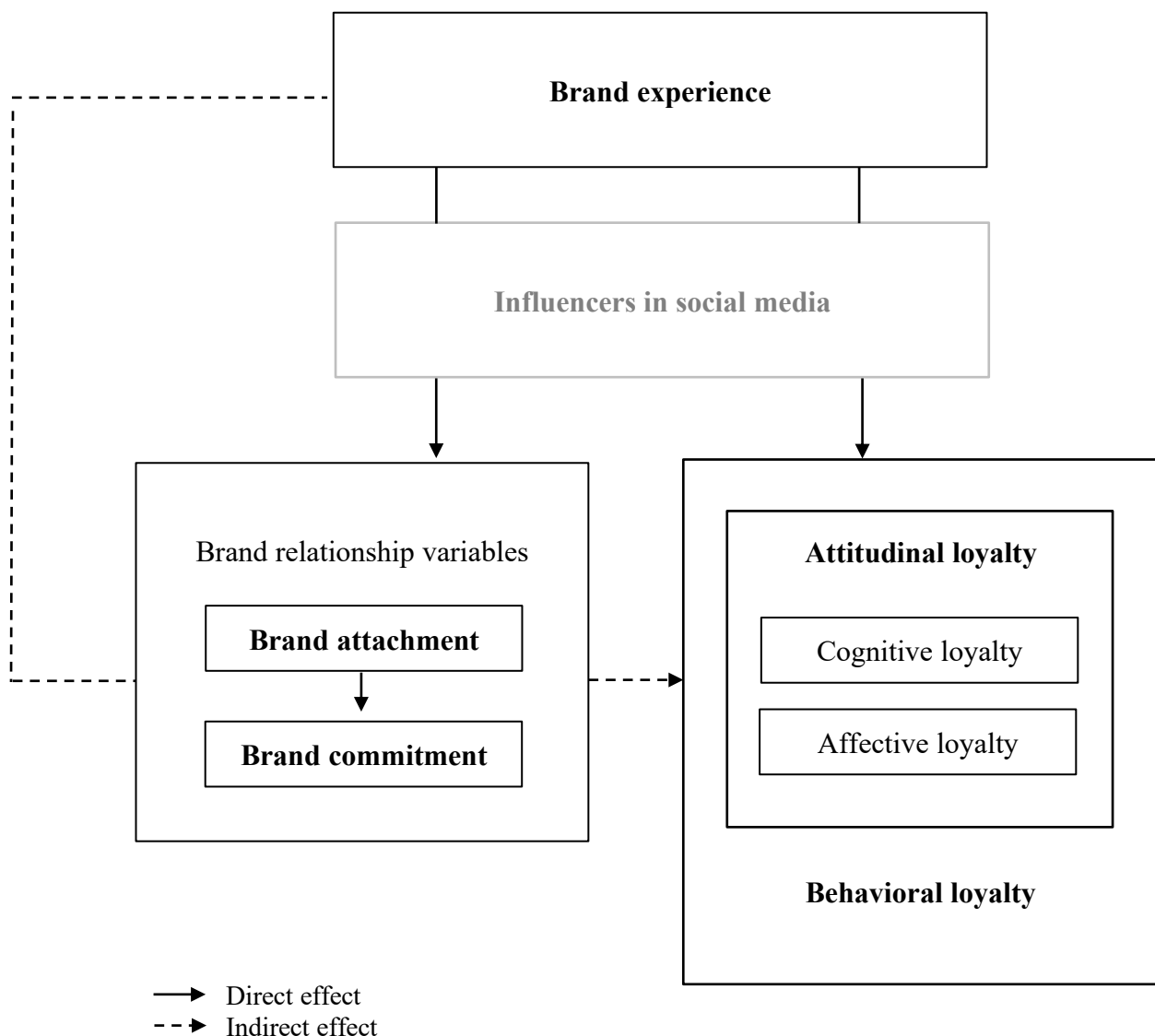
What influencers do is that they can help consumers to experience a whole new kind of brand experience. And when approaching the matter from the perspective of attitudinal loyalty, it can be assumed that influencers engage with their followers through the attitudinal elements and even change the attitudes of followers through communication (Kelman, 1958). As discussed before, these indirect brand experiences happen through communication or advertising (Brakus et al., 2009), but what makes the communication between an influencer and a follower special is the attachment. What Thomson (2006) argues, is that with human brands attachment plays a central role in the relationship. The experiences provided by human brands are affectively rich when consumers are attached to them, and these attachments elevate the levels of satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Thomson, 2006). Similarly, affective aspects have the biggest effect on brand loyalty too, as the ‘true brand loyalty’ happens only through affective commitment (Iglesias et al., 2011).

Partly, the role of influencers on providing brand experiences is also enhanced by their authenticity. According to Audrezet et al. (2020), since social media influencers’ primary activity revolves around self-expression, this could manifest itself as influencers tendency to value intrinsic motivations and produce social media content based on their love for the topic and their activity. In contrast, brands can be considered as inauthentic, if they do business or marketing to only increase profits (Audrezet et al., 2020), which usually is considered as the main goal of companies putting brands in unfavorable positions. For the benefit of influencers

there is also the impact of trust, since influencers can be seen as experts in their specific areas, and they have established themselves in that way in the minds of followers (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Thus, what this thesis argues is that through brand experiences, consisting of cognitive and affective aspects, such as information and knowledge about the brand, but also of a wide range of affective aspects, influencers can enhance brand experiences and even improve attitudinal loyalty. Influencers can thus be added as an aspect of brand experiences and loyalty, which is seen in the Figure 3. In the figure influencers operate as mediators between the brand experience and brand loyalty, where brand experiences partly occur through influencers.

**Figure 3** – *Influencers’ role as mediators between the brand experience and loyalty*



#### **4.2.1 Enhancing affective aspects**

As discussed before, affective kind of commitment in terms of attitudinal loyalty can be considered as the most powerful one (Iglesias et al., 2011), and according to Oliver (1997) affect is more deeply encoded in the minds of consumers compared to cognition. Also, influencers are in an advantageous position from the very start when communicating about brands, since their followers might already be attached to them (Thomson, 2006). If the affective attachment exists, it could be assumed that there is a greater ability to create emotional bonds with the brand-related content also.

Central for the brand attachment theory was the self-concept which can enhance the affective, attitudinal, and behavioral consumer responses to the brand (e.g., Malär et al., 2011; Park et al., 2011; Aaker, 1999). The reason behind following influencers can be at least partially justified by the same reasons as consuming brands, which is the expression of self-concept and developing a sense of oneness (Malär et al., 2011; Park et al., 2011). Through self-concept consumers are motivated to act in ways that reinforce this self-concept, such as preferring, purchasing, and using brands with similar personality (Malär et al., 2011). Identification, a similar concept to self-congruence, derives from the degree to which one perceives to have things in common with and to be like someone else (Hoffner and Buchanan, 2005). With influencers, identification is expected to be strongly determined by perceived similarity (Schouten et al., 2019). In addition, one could assume that self-concept and identification are easier to develop with real humans who have more identifiable features compared to inanimate brands.

If people follow influencers for the reason of identification in some extent, there would presumably be a willingness to consume same products or brands as the influencer does. Through the perceived similarity, it could be assumed, that a consumer would want to express his or her self-concept through by consuming a brand with a particular personality (Malär et al., 2011) which again is reflected by the identification on the influencer's persona as a consumer of certain products.

Another similar aspect is relatedness, which is person's need to feel a sense of closeness with others (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Thomson (2006), for example, find out that relatedness is closely

related to the emotional attachment toward human brands. This is based on an argument by Baumeister and Leary (1995) that when person can fulfill his/her need of relatedness by an object this will result in increased positive affect, such as feelings of attachment and love. According to the experiments made by Thomson (2006), customers are more likely to develop strong attachments if during the interaction with human brands they are made to feel capable of self-expression and self-governance and to feel a sense of closeness and intimacy. This is also supported by studies of Malär et al. (2011) who suggested that through greater self-congruence and personal connections the brand attachment becomes higher.

As discussed earlier when exploring brand attachment, the correlation between attachment and loyalty exists. Influencers offer a great opportunity for brands to create brand attachment, since due to identification and relatedness, for example, the attachment might already exist between the follower and the influencer. Through the indirect relationship variables, attachment might first lead to brand commitment, which is then followed by brand loyal attitudes and behaviors.

Central for brand experiences are also the visual and aesthetic aspects, which evoke sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses (Brakus et al., 2009). With the personal aesthetic touches and personality twists in their posted content influencers can create an enjoyable experience for their followers (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Similarly in physical contexts, aesthetic cues such as color scheme, lighting, and odor influence shopper responses and decisions (Baker et al., 1992). Naturally, social media does not at least yet have the opportunity to provide multi-sensory brand experience since it would be lacking senses such as odor, taste, and touch, but essential for the online brand experiences is the perceived entertainment. Heinonen (2011) reviewed several studies regarding the motivators of social media usage and based on them proposed that consumer motivations can be examined in terms of entertainment, social connection, and information. Through entertainment consumers felt like they were escaping the real world and relaxing, or simply entertaining themselves (Heinonen, 2011). Similarly, the aesthetic touches creating enjoyable experiences that influencers provide in their posted content, create entertainment value for consumers (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Visual aspects also have connection to the self-concept. For example, the layout and environment, where the brand is placed, portray a certain type of personality and because of this experience, consumers can reach their ideal self-concept and experience greater fun and entertainment (Nam et al., 2011). Considering, that relatedness and identification are one of the



reasons behind following influencers, the layout or environment where the brand is promoted in (i.e., traveler promoting an airline brand on his/her YouTube video) might already be something the consumer considers as part of their ideal self-concept since they are following that kind of content. Thus, influencers again have the vantage on helping consumers to reach their ideal self-concept.

#### **4.2.2 Enhancing cognitive aspects**

In addition to affective aspects, influencers also have the ability to enhance the cognitive aspects of brand experiences since posts they create offer follower's information about product alternatives or other informative content (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Schouten et al. (2019) similarly states that influencers can be seen essential on providing information, and followers judge them to be reliable information sources. This gives influencers' credibility on providing information of specific brands. Also, the before mentioned trust reflects the credibility through the fact that influencers can be considered as experts in their own areas (Lou and Yuan, 2019), thus consumers might rely on influencers promoting brands which they consider good and which qualities they have the knowledge of. Authenticity of influencers in a way can also be seen as a trust increasing element if the motivations of promoting a brand are based on intrinsic factors (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Edell and Burke (1987) suggest that cognitive element consists of subjects' judgments of the characteristics that the act of communication has – for example, with an ad these characteristics would be descriptions of the ad itself, such as “humorous” or “informative”. Adding information and knowledge about the brand surely is important as it is the first step towards brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999; 1997). What influencers possess well is the embedding of commercial messages in their content. For instance, when consumers are already enjoying the entertainment value of the content provided, they tolerate branded or advertised content much better compared to traditional ads (Ashely and Tuten, 2015). Influencers can transition to the commercial part of the content smoothly, as it might come very naturally considering the flow of the entertainment, for instance, if a food-related content provider would introduce a grocery brand in the process of preparing a meal.

Different from the gradual process of loyalty, where cognitive loyalty is followed by affective loyalty, with social media the cognitive aspects might occur after the affective responses. This has been noticed with advertising especially, for instance, results of MacKenzie et al. (1986) support the fact that affective reactions to ads can affect how the ad is processed later (Burke and Edell, 1989). Thus, if customer's affective ties towards an influencer already exist, the cognitive response might come afterwards, when the customer associates the brand to the influencer in a different context later. This reversive order can also appear with just mentioned commercial messages in-between the content produced, when customer is already entertained, and only after that receives information about the brand.

## 5 Discussion

The main goal of this thesis was to answer two types of questions: how consumers become loyal to brands in the first place, and how loyalty (attitudinal loyalty specifically) can be improved in social media context through influencer mediated brand experiences. The main findings for the first question were that loyalty happens through different levels, consisting of cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral loyalty (Oliver 1997; 1999; Yuksel et al., 2010), and the whole process is influenced by brand experiences' direct and indirect effects (Iglesias et al., 2011; Brakus et al., 2009; Ramaseshan and Stein, 2014).

The first research question of this thesis also laid foundations for the latter one, as essential with influencers' effects on loyalty is to concentrate on the attitudinal aspects. The relevance of connecting influencers between brand experiences and loyalty can be explained by the low interest consumers have towards brands' content (Holt, 2016) which is why external operators are needed to reach out the wide range of social media users.

When investigating the role of influencers as brand experience mediators the central finding was that influencers especially have the ability to affect the attitudinal side of loyalty, which happens through affective and cognitive aspects. This literature review identified that affective aspects of brand experiences provided by influencers can be enhanced for instance by the means of identification (Hoffner and Buchanan, 2005) or self-congruence (Malär et al., 2011), relatedness (Deci and Ryan, 2000), visual and aesthetic appeal (Brakus et al., 2009; Lou and Yuan, 2019), and entertainment (Heinonen, 2011). Through cognitive aspects influencers affect by providing information (Lou and Yuan, 2019) and being credible sources of it (Scouten, 2019; Lou and Yuan, 2019), together with a good opportunity to embed the commercial messages in the content provided (Ashely and Tuten, 2015). Also, the affective responses might later be activated by cognitive aspects (MacKenzie et al., 1986).

From the practical point of view, the utilization of influencers in marketing communications seems to be essential for brands. Through self-congruence and identification, it would be important for companies to approach influencers who truly identify themselves as consumers of a specific brand, to make the marketing efforts effective. This would also enhance the credibility of influencers, as the commercial cooperation's would seem more authentic

considering the brands fit in influencer's personal brand. In fact, critical issue arising from the use of influencers is the lack of authenticity, since influencers might encounter tensions between creating content that satisfies the brand partnered with and creating content that satisfies their own needs (Audrezet et al., 2020).

To increase loyalty, one could assume that when branded content with the same brand and the same influencer is repeated several times this could improve the brand's role as a part of the influencer's own identity. Through identification, deriving from the degree of which one perceives to have things in common with someone else (Hoffner and Buchanan, 2006), this could then enhance brand loyalty among the followers too, as the image of the influencer as a consumer of a specific brand would strengthen, urging them to consume the brand also.

However, naturally further statements of the power of influencers cannot be drawn since the conclusions suggested comes from empirical research only. Studies on influencers' impact on brand responses overall are relatively understudied (Schouten et al., 2019), and there haven't been many studies on the correlation between brand loyalty and engaging with influencers, which is why this thesis offers only theoretical framework for the topic. Other limitations mainly come from the fact that brand experience and brand loyalty as concepts are rather multidimensional and complex. Even if brand experiences have big influence on brand loyalty among other brand equity variables, there are also other factors affecting the formation of brand loyalty. External factors, that are out of the reach of marketing managers are one example of this – for instance, word-of-mouth that a brand isn't aware of, such as customer hearing directly from a friend who dislikes a specific brand, could presumably have major impact on brand loyalty.

For future research, the attitudinal aspects of brand experiences provided by influencers, could be further investigated. Special focus could be on the affective aspects since with human brands attachment plays central role in the relationship (Thomson, 2006). For instance, are followers more approving towards branded content when their well-thought-of influencer posts it? What comes to cognitive aspects, especially the reversive effect should be studied in the context of social media and influencers, such as whether consumers associate a brand to a specific influencer when encountering information about the brand after been exposed to branded content provided by this influencer. The connection of brand experiences could also be investigated even further by connecting it to brand loyalty, as this thesis also suggests. For

instance, do followers more often seek to consume these products when they see someone relatable and identifiable use them? And how big is the overall impact that influencers have on their followers when discussing about brand loyalty?

---

## References:

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing brand equity; capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. The Free Press, New York, N.Y.
- Aaker, J. L. (1999). The malleable self: The role of self-expression in persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(1), 45-57. doi: 10.2307/3151914.
- Amine, A. (1998). Consumers' true brand loyalty: the central role of commitment. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 6(4), 305-319. doi: 10.1080/096525498346577.
- Anderson, E. W. (1998). Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research*, 1(1), 5-17. doi: 10.1177/109467059800100102.
- Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15-27. doi: 10.1002/mar.20761.
- Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 557-569. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008.
- Baker, J., Levy, M., & Grewal, D. (1992). An experimental approach to making retail store environmental decisions. *Journal of Retailing*, 68(4), 445.
- Ball, D., Coelho, P. S., & Machás, A. (2004). The role of communication and trust in explaining customer loyalty: An extension to the ECSI model. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(5/6), 687-707. doi: 10.1108/03090560410548979.

- Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand love. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(2), 1-16. doi: 10.1509/jm.09.0339.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497.
- Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57-71. doi: 10.1177/002224299205600205.
- Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 52-68. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.73.3.052.
- Bruhn, M., Schoenmueller, V., & Schäfer, D. B. (2012). Are social media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation?. *Management Research Review*, 35(9), 770-790. doi: 10.1108/01409171211255948.
- Copeland, M. T. (1923). Relation of consumer's buying habits to marketing method. *Harvard Business Review* 1, 282-9.
- Day, G. S. (1969). A Two-Dimensional Concept to Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 9 (September), 29-35. doi: 10.1007/978-3-642-51565-1\_26.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The " what" and " why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268. doi: 10.1207/S15327965PLI1104\_01.
- Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), 99-113. doi: 10.1177/0092070394222001.
- Dolbec, P. Y., & Chebat, J. C. (2013). The impact of a flagship vs. a brand store on brand attitude, brand attachment and brand equity. *Journal of Retailing*, 89(4), 460-466. doi: 10.1016/j.jretai.2013.06.003.
- Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 11-27. doi: 10.2307/1251126.

- Edell, J. A., & Burke, M. C. (1987). The power of feelings in understanding advertising effects. *Journal of Consumer research*, 14(3), 421-433. doi: 10.1086/209124.
- Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A., & Davis, L. M. (2003). Empirical testing of a model of online store atmospherics and shopper responses. *Psychology & Marketing*, 20(2), 139-150. doi: 10.1002/mar.10064.
- Evanschitzky, H., & Wunderlich, M. (2006). An examination of moderator effects in the four-stage loyalty model. *Journal of Service Research*, 8(4), 330-345. doi: 10.1177/1094670506286325.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343-373. doi: 10.1086/209515.
- Fournier, S. and Yao, J. L. (1997). Reviving brand loyalty: A reconceptualization within the framework of consumer-brand relationships. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 14(5), pp. 451-472. doi: 10.1016/S0167-8116(97)00021-9.
- Fullerton, G. (2003). When does commitment lead to loyalty? *Journal of Service Research*, 5(4), 333-344. doi: 10.1177/1094670503005004005.
- Gupta, S., & Vajic, M. (1999). The contextual and dialectical nature of experiences. In J. Fitzsimmons & M. Fitzsimmons (Eds.), *New service development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 33-51.
- Ha, H. Y., & Perks, H. (2005). Effects of consumer perceptions of brand experience on the web: Brand familiarity, satisfaction and brand trust. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review*, 4(6), 438-452. doi: 10.1002/cb.29.
- Heinonen, K. (2011). Consumer activity in social media: Managerial approaches to consumers' social media behavior. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 10(6), 356-364. doi: 10.1002/cb.376.
- Hoffner, C., & Buchanan, M. (2005). Young adults' wishful identification with television characters: The role of perceived similarity and character attributes. *Media Psychology*, 7(4), 325-351. doi: 10.1207/S1532785XMEP0704\_2.
- Holt, D. (2016). Branding in the Age of Social Media. *Harvard Business Review*, March 2016.

- Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), 132-140. doi: 10.1086/208906.
- Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J., & Batista-Foguet, J. M. (2011). The role of brand experience and affective commitment in determining brand loyalty. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(8), 570-582. doi: 10.1057/bm.2010.58.
- Jacoby, J., Chestnut, R. W., and Fisher, W. A. (1978). A Behavioral Process Approach to Information Acquisition in Nondurable Purchasing. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 15(4), pp. 532–544. doi: 10.2307/3150623.
- Jacoby, J. and Kyner, D. B. (1973). Brand Loyalty Vs. Repeat Purchasing Behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 10(1), pp. 1–9. doi: 10.2307/3149402.
- Keller, K. L. (2002). Branding and brand equity. In Bart Weitz, & Robin Wensley (Eds.), *Handbook of Marketing* (pp. 151-178). London: Sage Publications.
- Kelman, H. C. (1958). Compliance, identification, and internalization three processes of attitude change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2(1), 51-60. doi: 10.1177/002200275800200106.
- Kumar, S., & Shah, D. (2004). Building and sustaining profitable customer loyalty for the 21st century. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(4), 317-329. doi: 10.1016/j.jretai.2004.10.007.
- LaBerge, L., O’Toole, C., Schneider, J., & Smaje, K. (2020). How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point – and transformed business forever. *McKinsey Quarterly*, October 2020.
- Lau, G. T., & Sook, H. L. (1999). Consumers' trust in a brand and the link to brand loyalty. *Journal of Market - Focused Management*, 4(4), 341. doi: 10.1023/A:1009886520142.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: how message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73. doi: 10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501.
- MacKenzie, S. B., Lutz, R. J., & Belch, G. E. (1986). The role of attitude toward the ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness: A test of competing explanations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23(2), 130-143. doi: 10.2307/3151660.



- Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D., & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional brand attachment and brand personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 35-52. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.75.4.35.
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. The MIT Press.
- Moorman, C., & McCarthy, T. (2021). CMOs: Adapt Your Social Media Strategy for a Post-Pandemic World. *Harvard Business Review*, January 2021.
- Nam, J., Ekinici, Y., & Whyatt, G. (2011). Brand equity, brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 1009-1030. doi: 10.1016/j.annals.2011.01.015.
- Nisar, T. M., & Whitehead, C. (2016). Brand interactions and social media: Enhancing user loyalty through social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 62, 743-753. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2016.04.042
- Oliver, R. (1997). *Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer*. McGraw-Hill Companies, New York, 1997.
- Oliver, R. (1999). Whence Consumer Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63 (Special Issue), 33-44. doi: 10.2307/1252099.
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. R. (2008). Brand attachment and management of a strategic brand exemplar. Bernd H. Schmitt, David L. Rogers (Eds.). *Handbook of Brand and Experience Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing, Northampton, MA (2008). pp. 3-17
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1-17. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.74.6.1.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), 5-14. doi: 10.1002/dir.20015
- Pullman, M. E., & Gross, M. A. (2004). Ability of experience design elements to elicit emotions and loyalty behaviors. *Decision Sciences*, 35(3), 551-578. doi: 10.1111/j.0011-7315.2004.02611.x

- Ramaseshan, B., & Stein, A. (2014). Connecting the dots between brand experience and brand loyalty: The mediating role of brand personality and brand relationships. *Journal of Brand Management*, 21(7), 664-683. doi: 10.1057/bm.2014.23.
- Reichheld, F. F., & Teal, T. (1996). The loyalty effect: The hidden force behind growth, profits and lasting. *Harvard Business School Publications*, Boston.
- Reinartz, W., & Kumar, V. (2002). The mismanagement of customer loyalty. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(7), 86-94.
- Rindova, V. P., Pollock, T. G., & Hayward, M. L. (2006). Celebrity firms: The social construction of market popularity. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(1), 50-71. doi: 10.5465/AMR.2006.19379624.
- Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1-3), 53-67. doi: 10.1362/026725799784870496.
- Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 258-281. doi: 10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898.
- Simon, C. J., & Sullivan, M. W. (1993). The measurement and determinants of brand equity: A financial approach. *Marketing Science*, 12(1), 28-52. doi: 10.1287/mksc.12.1.28.
- Thomson, M., Macinnis, D.J., & Park, C.W. (2005). The ties that bind: Measuring the strength of consumers' emotional attachment to brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(1), 77-91. doi: 10.1207/s15327663jcp1501\_10.
- White, C., & Yu, Y. T. (2005). Satisfaction emotions and consumer behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(6/7), 411-420. doi: 10.1108/08876040510620184.
- Wong, K. (2014). The Explosive Growth Of Influencer Marketing And What It Means For You. *Forbes*, September 2014.
- Yim, C. K., & Kannan P. K. (1999). Consumer behavioral loyalty: A segmentation model and analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(2), pp. 75-92. doi: 10.1016/S0148-2963(97)00243-9.

Yoo, B., Donthu, N., & Lee, S. (2000). An examination of selected marketing mix elements and brand equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 195-211. doi: 10.1177/0092070300282002.

Yuksel, A., Yuksel, F., & Bilim, Y. (2010). Destination attachment: Effects on customer satisfaction and cognitive, affective and conative loyalty. *Tourism management*, 31(2), 274-284. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2009.03.007.