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Role of Marketing Strategies in Building Brand Loyalty among Gen Z Consumers

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Abstract

Generation Z (Gen Z), the generation born from approximately 1997-2012, is the first truly digitally native generation of consumers. Traditional loyalty models are no longer viable due to the spread of their particular patterns of behaviour. In this paper, we discuss how select marketing techniques: Digital Authenticity, Social Commerce, Value Alignment (Ethics and Sustainability), and Experiential Marketing can help build brand loyalty among Gen Z. The analysis indicates that the retention for this group is relational, dynamic and based on ethical continuity and personalised platform-based experiences. Brands shifting from mass outreach to being participatory, transparent, and values driven, will prevail.

Key point: When it comes to Gen Z's brand loyalty, it's the real, ethical and personalized digital experiences that matter. Brands who value transparency, social interaction, sustainability and participatory marketing will retain this generation.

Introduction

Background and Context

Brand loyalty is the desire of a consumer to repeat purchase and endorse a brand. It has been an important component of sustainable success for a long time. But more recently the emergence of Gen Z has upset loyalty mechanisms. This generation was raised during times of economic unrest, overexposure to social media and endless retreating noise on digital platforms. They are cynical, intolerant of inauthenticity and have never seen competitor information sent to them, so their loyalty is fickle and conditional. This is important to both marketers and academics.

Defining Generation Z

Millennials are digital immigrants while Generation Z is a digital native. They can go through TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, game worlds, and more easily. They make purchasing decisions not only based on functionality or cost but on their sense of self, the social stamp of approval, and their perception of the ethical behaviour of the brand.

The Ever-Changing Loyalty Paradigm

For previous generations of generations loyalty was the result of habit, convenience, and rewards. Gen Z defines loyalty based on the following factors:

- Authenticity - Consistency between brand's espoused values and its behaviour.
- Alignment - How much the ethical values of the brand and the values of the consumer coincide.
- Involvement - the capacity to co-create or affect the brand storey.

This paper investigates the marketing strategies that build this new source of loyalty.

Research Objectives

Gen Z consumer loyalty is influenced by their identity, behaviour, and values.

Analyse effect of Digital Authenticity and Transparency on trust and commitment

Recovering baseline Social Commerce and Platform-native marketing on repeat purchases.

Highlight why Ethical Alignment and Sustainability messaging play an integral role in loyalty;

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Principles of Brand Loyalty, Underlying Theories

Brand loyalty traditionally is based on Attitudinal Loyalty (psychological referents) and Behavioural Loyalty (repetitive behaviour - purchase):

Behavioural Models (e.g. Repeat Purchase Theory) are inclined to account for habit and switching costs, yet disregard Gen Z's affective fickleness.

Attitudinal Models (e.g. Affective Commitment Theory) focus on emotional attachment which is important in the context of Gen Z through social and ethical judgement.

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If Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory was one-to-one, with Gen Z it has evolved to Community, which breed peer-to-peer relationships.

Consumer Behaviour: Gen Z Consumer Traits Scepticism and being Information Fluent

Generation Z can easily identify fake news and advertisements. They want radical transparency, and they make brands disclose everything.

Identity Expression and Individuality.

Brands serve as mechanisms for self definition. Personalization and Community: Personalization gives customers a greater sense of belonging to a community.

Based On Value (Ethical Prerogatives) Consumption

There is no compromise on ethics, sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and CSR. Incongruity between a brand and its corresponding behaviour causes immediate negative reaction.

Platform Media independentness

They are following short-form videos on TikTok, Reels, etc. Advertising should be succinct, authentic and native, and not repurposed TV.

How Loyalty has Changed in the Digital Age

Trust, Alignment, Advocacy: GenZ is following a loyalty cycle based on this model.

Building Trust - Authenticity, Influencer Credibility, and Transparency.

Relational Commitment - Proved involvement in social and environmental issues

Behaviours Reinforcing - Better product experience and ability to lead to ambassadorship.

The Role of Social Commerce

Social commerce brings entertaining and buying together into platforms, eliminating friction and instantaneous transactions. Personal, custom, peer-reviewed experiences create loyalty.

Marketing Strategy

Digital Meaningfulness and Credibility

One: The Imperative of Authenticity.

Authenticity is the Gen Z's No. 1 loyalty driver. They want to see the true brand - the one with the vulnerabilities and flaws.

Thinking Beyond Polished Production.

Brands must ditch glossy ads and embrace raw and user-generated content (UGC) and behind-the-scenes content.

Strategy - Behind the Scenes Access Share product development videos, employee faces and supply chain challenges

Impact - Broaching the brand pitch creates a change in loyalty from transactional to attitudinal.

Radical Honesty in the Communication

With honesty comes a far better outcome than tending to be sterile. The credibility is recovered by the publicity in a controversy.

The Transparency Framework: Booking Acting Supply Chains

Strategy: Supply Chain Visibility - Managing Supply Chain Visibility through Blockchain or QR Codes

Impact Satisfied claimants lower their skepticism, and enhance communication bonds.

Tapping into Authentic Influencers

This means that Micros and Nano influencers seem closer to Gen Z's networks.

Strategy - Content collab with under 100k influencers for platform native content.

Disclosure - There must be transparent and paid relationships to the point of action being credible or credibility falls.

Transparency as Community Management.

Inbound Marketing Strategy: Humorous, Livid Interaction in Unexclusively Spoken Dialect.

Impact - When the community relationships are respectful, customers become co-creators that strengthen loyalty.

Marketing Strategy 2: Value and Ethical Commitment

Can Ethical Consumption be a Loyalty Driver?

Gen Z consumers are inhibited from making a change to something that is not ethical, brand purpose is foundational.

Social Responsibility and the Environment.

Circularity and Durability - Strategy - Provide effective initiatives, sustainable packaging, long-lasting products

Relevance - Generation Z identifies with the circular economy's source of responsibility.

Social Justice and Diversity.

Strategy - Authentic Representation: Campaign Diversity and Internal Recruitment

Impact - Consistency is needed between message and practise to avoid backlashes and loss of loyalty.

Anti pressure on preventing messaging that falsely presents itself as being in support of equality, particularly where equality refers, explicitly or implicitly, to specific races or ethnic groups. 4.2 Anti-woke-washing mandate

Strategy - Measurable Action: Make measurable donations and report on CSR in an effective and transparent manner.

Partnerships: Legit long-term integration wins Gen Z loyalty.

Experiential Marketing and Sociocultural Values

Strategy - Purpose - Driven Events Host pop ups, virtual gatherings or gaming tournaments to support causes host.

Emotion becomes loyalty when it has been turned into a shared experience.

Personalization as Ethics vs. Privacy Invasion

Gen Z seeks personalization without affecting their privacy.

Strategy - Opt In Value Exchange - Be clear on the reasons why you are using data and how it will help.

Impact - Breaches kill off loyalty; controlling is open - create trust.

Marketing Strategy 3: Social Commerce and Platform Engaging Paradigm

Frictionless Experience: Social Commerce

Strategy - Buy Button: Buy Now and Live streams: Live shopping using Buy Now buttons in app.

Reinforcement-Behavioural loyalty is reinforced by great convenience.

Content that is native to the platform.

Strategy: TikTokification: Entice the remixing of short, fun, audio-based content and clips.

Impact - Peer-like content gets around the ad scepticism and promotes storey ownership.

Gamification and Community Building.

Strategy - Loyalty as a Game - Ultimately, the points need to be translated into status, digital currencies or design power.

Influence - Competition forces users into the ecosystem, and reward institutions encourage users to stay.

Empowering Peer Advocacy and UGC.

Strategic Planning: Reward User Generated Content: Contests, challenges, and rewards for user-generated content.

Power of UGC - UGC is a powerful form of social proof that customers quickly become advocates and begins a self-sustaining loop of loyalty.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

In order to build trust, marketers need to move from transaction to relationship, to ethical, and to participative models of marketing. It is that the Gen Z generation trust is built through integrity and alignment.

Key insights:

Authentic content will create initial trust, transparency and candidness should be a pre-requisite for influencers to work honestly.

Ethical brands are built on integrity, and integrity is built on the why.

Frictionless commerce enables reward loops; behavioural reinforcement and gamification content is a natural fit to community and platform-native interactions are a key part of speeding up loyalty.

For Gen Z, products are no longer the key to loyalty, they see loyalty as purpose and how you treat the community more than in the past.

Strategic Recommendations

Adopt a four-pillar approach:

1. Trust Leadership - Integrate transparency and corporate morality across the entire brand, publishing annual sustainability and diversity information;

2. Decentralized Content - Invest in UGC and micro - influencer relations, content should be a conversation (not broadcast)

3. Gamified Loyalty - Move away from linear points and tiered and game-like loyalty rewards recognising advocacy and community influence.

4. Purpose in Action - Made to have clear and measurable outcomes - Eg. fund allocation, policy change effect, circular programmes etc

Any brand that adopts these relational strategies will shift from a seller's role to one of trusted partner and identity platform for Gen Z consumers.

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