

The Role of Brand Engagement in Building Brand Love in FMCG Sector in Gujarat state

Jasdev Singh Luhar

Abstract:

This study investigates the significance of brand engagement in cultivating brand love within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in Gujarat, India. It identifies brand engagement as crucial for creating meaningful consumer-brand interactions that foster loyalty through authentic experiences and trust. The research, conducted with 255 young urban consumers using descriptive research design and analyzed via SPSS 27, finds that factors like attractiveness, expertise, and congruence significantly influence brand love, with brand engagement being the most impactful. The study reveals that effective brand engagement strategies, such as digital campaigns and experiential marketing, enhance emotional attachment and loyalty, ultimately leading to brand advocacy and sustained consumer relationships. These insights guide FMCG companies in Gujarat to align engagement initiatives with consumer identities, contributing to a sustainable competitive edge through brand love.

Keywords:

Brand love, Brand engagement, Brand experience, Congruence, Brand relationships

1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, brands in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector face the challenge of attracting customers and sustaining long-term loyalty. Brand engagement and brand love are crucial concepts in this context, as they form the foundation of meaningful interactions between companies and consumers. Key strategies linking engagement to brand love often revolve around creating authentic experiences, ensuring consistent brand communication, and building trust. Brand engagement is the extent to which a consumer participates in or forms an interactive relationship with a brand, including purchasing decisions, online campaigns, conversations, and incorporating the brand into their daily lives. Effective brand engagement helps companies transform one-time buyers into loyal customers who willingly recommend the product to others. Brand love is an emotional state where consumers develop deep affection and passion for a brand, similar to interpersonal love, and goes beyond satisfaction and rational evaluation.

Brand engagement should ideally serve as the pathway toward building brand love in the FMCG industry. By continuously engaging consumers through digital platforms, loyalty programs, influencer partnerships, and interactive campaigns, brands can enhance both satisfaction and emotional connection. When engagement is consistent, authentic, and value-driven, it fosters trust and belonging, eventually maturing into brand love.

Real-life FMCG examples demonstrate how brands convert engagement into love. Coca-Cola has successfully leveraged engagement strategies through global campaigns like personalized packaging and interactive events, while Dove has driven brand love with campaigns focusing on real beauty and self-confidence. Amul in India also keeps audiences engaged consistently through witty and relatable advertising while fostering a sense of national identity and pride.

Coca-Cola has improved customer engagement and brand loyalty through personalized marketing strategies. By analyzing consumer preferences and behaviors, the company created tailored experiences, including

personalized bottle campaigns and targeted email campaigns. This approach has led to higher open rates and increased likelihood of purchase. This personalization fosters direct communication, emotional ties, engagement, and brand loyalty in a competitive marketplace.

In the FMCG sector, where products often lack uniqueness at the functional level, the role of engagement in fostering brand love becomes indispensable. Companies that prioritize emotional connections alongside product performance are better equipped to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

2. Literature Review

Cultural branding theory suggests that brands are socially constructed and gain cultural transformation through consumer and business participation. Celebrities' personal branding can impact promotion generation and profit creation. Nike's success was achieved by signing Michael Jordan as a brand ambassador, introducing shoes with his iconic 'Jumpman' logo. (Kohli et al., 2024) Personal branding involves individuals applying brand-related activities to popularize themselves. Consumers' brand love is integrated into their personalities, and lack of passion for a product can prevent negativity and maintain positive feelings. Sports celebrities' personal branding can create a brand image, extending their popularity, charisma, and professional abilities to the brand. (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006)

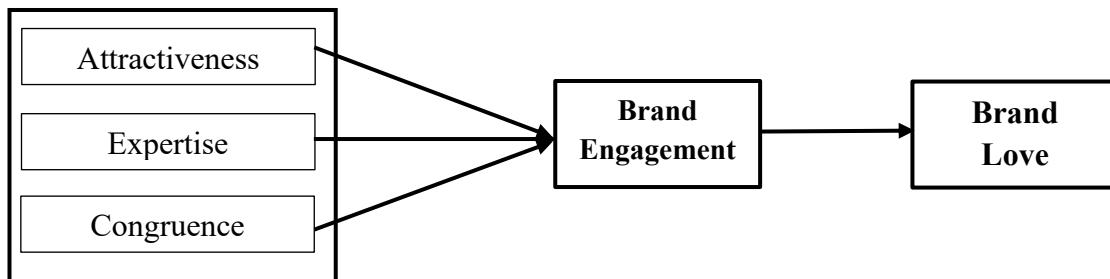
Brand active engagement is the behavioral aspect of brand engagement, focusing on the time, energy, and effort consumers devote to brand-related activities within the metaverse environment. This research study explores the purchase intention of goods in futuristic technology platforms such as the metaverse, virtual reality applications, and augmented reality apps. Virtual experience positively influences travel intent in the real world, as positive perceptions enhance decision-making abilities. Research on brand knowledge impacts consumer engagement in various technology settings, such as social media, e-commerce, and online buying. Recommendations include linking brands with new communication technologies to enhance brand engagement.

Brand love is a positive attitude towards a brand resulting from a friendly interaction between the consumer and the brand. It is a passion, emotional bond, and commitment developed through a long-term relationship between the consumer and the brand. Brand love is a stronger measure of desirable post-consumption behaviors of satisfied consumers, as they are willing to part with more income to acquire a product and are interested in collecting and discussing information about the brand.

The degree to which a customer's self-concept reflects his or her perception of a specific brand is said to have some bearing on the customer's behavior, according to the self-congruity theory. customers frequently favour brands that are more in line with their sense of self than those that are less so (helgeson & supphellen, 2019). therefore, if a customer's self-concept is more in line with that of the brand, they are more likely to have a favourable perception of it. the four different categories of self-concept (i.e. actual self, ideal self, social self, and ideal social self) provide the basis for actual self-congruity, ideal self-congruity, social self-congruity, and ideal social self-congruity. Self-congruity research has also produced the most convincing evidence for both actual and ideal self-congruity. self-congruity theory was used by (Lee et al. 2020) to indicate that self - congruity positively influences customer engagement on social networking sites, particularly, Facebook. similarly, according to (Andonova et al. 2015), self-congruity theory emphasizes the significance of matching brand encounters with people's self-concepts, which makes it essential for social customer engagement research. to sum up, self-congruity theory explains customer engagement by aligning brand image with customers' self-concept, enhancing connection and loyalty, which is developed by (Andonova et al. 2015) as well.

Many studies have explored general consumer trust and brand engagement dynamics but have not sufficiently examined how these contemporary strategies shape consumer purchase decisions in localized contexts (Taheri et al., 2024; Galdón-Salvador et al., 2024; Hsu et al., 2024). This gap highlights the need for rigorous, context-specific, empirical research that investigates the causal relationships, particularly in emerging markets.

Proposed Research Model



Hypothesis

H1: Attractiveness will have a positive relationship with Brand love.

H2: Expertise will have a positive relationship with Brand love.

H3: Congruence will have a positive relationship with Brand love.

H4: Brand Engagement will positively influence Brand love.

H5: There is a positive relationship between Brand Engagement and Brand Love.

3. Methodology

Research Gap

The existing research on the FMCG sector in Gujarat reveals a strong focus on brand awareness, consumer buying behavior, and factors influencing brand loyalty such as product quality, price, and advertising. Studies have provided valuable insights into rural and urban consumer knowledge of FMCG brands, highlighting differences in brand recognition and usage patterns across socioeconomic groups. However, there remains a significant research gap in understanding the specific role of brand engagement in fostering brand love within the FMCG sector in Gujarat. While aspects like emotional branding, brand experience, and digital engagement have been explored at broader national levels, there is limited empirical evidence on how these factors contribute to brand love—the deep emotional connection consumers develop toward brands—particularly in the Gujarat context. Moreover, most studies emphasize brand loyalty drivers or brand awareness but do not sufficiently link active consumer-brand engagement behaviors to the formation and strengthening of brand love. This gap indicates the need for focused research that investigates how interactive brand engagement strategies can effectively build and sustain brand love among FMCG consumers in Gujarat, considering the unique cultural, economic, and digital landscape of the state. Such research could provide critical insights for marketers aiming to enhance brand-consumer relationships beyond loyalty towards emotional bonding and advocacy in this competitive sector.

Research objectives

- To analyze the relationship between brand engagement activities and the development of brand love among FMCG consumers in Gujarat.

- To examine the impact of emotional brand engagement on consumer loyalty within the FMCG sector in Gujarat.
- To assess how digital and social media brand engagement initiatives influence consumers' perception of brand love in Gujarat's FMCG market.
- To identify the role of experiential brand engagement (events, promotions, in-store experiences) in fostering brand love among FMCG customers in Gujarat.
- To evaluate demographic factors (age, gender, income, region) that moderate the relationship between brand engagement and brand love in Gujarat.
- To explore whether brand trust mediates the linkage between brand engagement and brand love in the FMCG sector.
- To compare the effectiveness of different dimensions of brand engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioural) in contributing to brand love for FMCG products in Gujarat.
- To provide managerial insights and recommendations for FMCG brands in Gujarat to design engagement strategies that strengthen brand love and long-term consumer relationships.

Research Design

This study uses a descriptive research design. A variety of surveys and fact-finding investigations are included in descriptive research. In this study, a questionnaire is employed to gather data using a descriptive research method. Through the use of a survey, the respondents were asked questions, and after receiving their replies, the data was examined.

Sampling method

The strategy which was used in the problem was the convenience sampling method, which means a population is selected due to the convenience of them being in the study. A convenience population is a subset of the probability sampling population that is chosen based on convenience.

Research instrument

The data collection involved developing a Google Form questionnaire which was circulated to persons who have engaged in meme marketing and interested in meme culture.

Sampling frame

The following qualities of the ideal population were relevant to the research:

- Age: Over 18;
- Geographic Location: Residents of Gujarat state (urban and semi-urban areas);
- Consumer Behavior: Individuals who regularly purchase FMCG products (at least once a week or month);
- Consumers who recognize brand campaigns or slogans of FMCG companies operating in Gujarat

Sample size

Hair et al. (1998) suggested a preferred degree of 15-20 observations for each focused variable for determining the sample size for this study. 10 cases/observations per pointer variable in setting can be used as a general

guideline (Nunnally, 1967). This research comprises a 255-sample size. (15 statements multiply with 20 observations)

Data Analysis Plan

Version 27.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences will be used for data analysis. Various statistical tests will be conducted based on the variables being examined.

Research instrument

The data collection involved developing a Google Form questionnaire which was circulated to persons who have engaged in meme marketing and interested in meme culture.

4. Data Analysis

The analysis and interpretation including the statistical analyses performed on the data are described. For this chapter, several data and statistical analyses were presented. The analysis of the data is carried out in accordance with the mathematical methods based on SPSS 27 program.

Description	Total	Percentage
Gender		
Male	147	57.65
Female	108	42.35
Age		
18-24	174	68.24
25-34	37	14.51
35-44	28	10.98
45 & above	16	6.27
Occupation		
Student	107	41.96
Service	17	6.67
Employed (Full time)	86	33.73
Employed (Part time)	34	13.33
Self-employed	11	4.31

The demographic data reveals that the majority of respondents are male, accounting for 57.65% of the sample, compared to females who make up 42.35%. In terms of age distribution, the largest group falls within the 18-24 bracket, comprising 68.24% of participants, followed by those aged 25-34 at 14.51%. A smaller proportion belongs to the 35-44 age group (10.98%), with just 6.27% aged 45 and above. Regarding occupation, students represent the largest segment at 41.96%, with full-time employees forming the next largest group at 33.73%. Part-time employees and those in service positions represent 13.33% and 6.67% respectively, while self-employed individuals comprise the smallest proportion at 4.31%. This demographic profile indicates a relatively youthful, predominantly student population, with males and full-time employees also significantly represented.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
Attractiveness	0.872	3
Expertise	0.807	3
Congruence	0.761	3
Brand Engagement	0.788	3

Brand Love	0.870	3
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The table displays the reliability coefficients for several variables, each measured by three items. Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables are above 0.75, indicating a good degree of internal consistency. Attractiveness and Brand Love have the highest reliability, with alpha values of 0.872 and 0.870, respectively. Expertise, Brand Engagement, and Congruence also demonstrate acceptable reliability, with alpha values of 0.807, 0.788, and 0.761. This suggests that the items for each variable are suitably interrelated, providing confidence in the consistency of the measurements used for these constructs.

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.912 ^a	.831	.829	0.41684	2.100

a. Predictors: (Constant), AT_Avg, EX_Avg, CN_Avg, BE_Avg

b. Dependent Variable: BL_Avg

ANOVA ^a					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	215.817	5	71.939	414.014	.000 ^b
Residual	43.787	250	0.174		
Total	321.272	255			

a. Dependent Variable: BL_Avg

b. Predictors: (Constant), AT_Avg, EX_Avg, CN_Avg, BE_Avg

	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7.921	1.071		8.256	.000
AT_Avg	.147	.258	.097	.473	.001
EX_Avg	.270	.670	.270	.407	.000
CN_Avg	.174	.077	.070	.600	.000
BE_Avg	.357	.527	.261	.667	.002

a. Dependent Variable: BL_Avg

The regression analysis reports a very strong model fit with an R value of 0.912 and an R Square of 0.831, suggesting that approximately 83.1% of the variance in the dependent variable "Brand Love Average (BL Avg)" is explained by the predictors — Attractiveness, Expertise, Congruence, and Brand Engagement. The Adjusted R Square is also high at 0.829, indicating the model's robustness even when accounting for the number of predictors. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.1 suggests no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.

The ANOVA table demonstrates the model's significance, with an F-statistic of 414.014 and a significance level of 0.000, showing that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting brand love. This means that, collectively, the predictors have a significant impact on the dependent variable. Examining the

coefficients, all predictors; Attractiveness (AT Avg), Expertise (EX Avg), Congruence (CN Avg), and Brand Engagement (BE Avg) have positive beta values and statistically significant effects on brand love. Brand Engagement shows the highest standardized beta coefficient (0.667), indicating it is the most influential predictor, followed by Congruence (0.407), Expertise (0.280), and Attractiveness (0.097). All predictors have significant p-values less than 0.05, confirming their meaningful contribution. In summary, the findings affirm that Attractiveness, Expertise, Congruence, and especially Brand Engagement have substantial and statistically significant effects on Brand Love within this model.

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	Variance Proportions		
					AT_Avg	EX_Avg	CN_Avg
1	1	4.800	1.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01
	2	0.080	7.75	0.02	0.02	0.20	0.01
	3	0.030	12.65	0.03	0.51	0.19	0.02
	4	0.010	21.91	0.03	0.12	0.21	0.30
	5	0.002	48.99	0.01	0.11	0.08	0.13

This table presents collinearity diagnostics for the regression model's predictors. The eigenvalues decrease steadily, indicating the relative importance of each dimension, while the condition indices range from 1.00 to 48.99. Typically, a condition index above 30 implies potential multicollinearity, and here, dimensions 4 and 5 show indices exceeding this threshold, suggesting some risk of multicollinearity in those dimensions. However, examining the variance proportions reveals that none of the variables—Constant, Attractiveness Average (AT_Avg), Expertise Average (EX_Avg), and Congruence Average (CN_Avg)—have high variance proportions clustered in components with high condition indices, indicating that multicollinearity is not severe or concentrated in specific variables. Overall, the predictors seem to have acceptable collinearity levels, supporting the reliability of the regression coefficients without significant distortion from multicollinearity.

5. Implications

The implications of this study are significant for both academic research and practical marketing strategies in the FMCG sector, particularly in Gujarat. The study empirically confirms that brand engagement drives brand love, highlighting the importance of interactive and emotional consumer-brand relationships beyond mere satisfaction. This suggests that FMCG companies should prioritize developing comprehensive engagement strategies, such as digital campaigns, loyalty programs, and experiential marketing, to foster deeper emotional connections with consumers. The strong influence of brand engagement compared to other factors like attractiveness and expertise underscores its role as a key pathway to enhancing brand loyalty and advocacy.

From a managerial perspective, the findings stress that companies can gain sustainable competitive advantage by focusing on authentic, consistent, and value-driven engagement efforts that resonate with consumers' self-concepts and emotions. For brands in Gujarat's unique socio-cultural context, integrating localized insights into engagement initiatives could maximize the impact on brand love. Furthermore, the study's confirmation of the link between congruence and brand love suggests marketers should ensure brand messaging aligns well with consumer identities to strengthen emotional attachment.

Academically, the research fills a gap in the understanding of the causal relationship between brand engagement and brand love in emerging markets like Gujarat, encouraging further contextualized studies. It also supports the integration of theories such as self-congruity and consumer-brand relationship frameworks to better explain consumer emotional bonding mechanisms. Overall, FMCG brands that effectively nurture

continuous, meaningful engagement are more likely to cultivate lifelong brand champions, leading to higher customer retention, positive word-of-mouth, and increased market share in a competitive environment.

The future scope of this study is significant, as it opens multiple avenues for further research and practical application. Future research can explore the role of brand engagement in fostering brand love across different sectors beyond FMCG, including technology, services, and luxury brands, to validate and expand the findings. There is also potential for longitudinal studies to examine how brand engagement strategies sustain brand love over extended periods and during market changes. Moreover, integrating digital innovations such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and metaverse platforms can provide deeper insights into evolving consumer-brand interactions and their emotional impacts. Additionally, investigating demographic and cultural variations in brand engagement's effectiveness can offer tailored marketing strategies for diverse consumer bases. This study's foundation encourages marketers to apply and optimize engagement techniques in dynamic environments, enhancing emotional consumer connections while providing practical managerial recommendations for building lasting brand loyalty. This research thus lays the groundwork for comprehensive, multi-dimensional studies that address contemporary challenges in brand-consumer relationships across varying contexts and technologies.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that brand engagement plays a crucial role in fostering brand love among consumers in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in Gujarat. The findings indicate that variables such as attractiveness, expertise, congruence, and especially brand engagement have significant positive effects on brand love, underscoring the importance of these factors in building deep emotional connections between consumers and brands. The regression model used in the study demonstrated strong explanatory power, with over 83% of the variance in brand love explained by the predictors, and all were found to be statistically significant.

The study also confirms the reliability of the measurement scales through high Cronbach's alpha scores, indicating consistent constructs. The demographic data revealed that the study sample primarily consisted of young consumers, mostly males and students, which reflects the youth-centric nature of FMCG consumption in the region.

Furthermore, the collinearity diagnostics suggest that multicollinearity among the predictors is not a significant concern, affirming the robustness of the model's coefficients.

Overall, the study emphasizes that for FMCG brands aiming to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, focusing on interactive and emotional engagement strategies is essential. By creating authentic consumer experiences and aligning brands with consumers' self-concepts, companies can cultivate brand love, which goes beyond loyalty to foster lasting emotional bonds and advocacy. These results provide valuable managerial insights for FMCG marketers in Gujarat to design effective brand engagement strategies that enhance consumer-brand relationships and drive long-term brand equity.

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